

# **People, perceptions and policies: public sector workforce alignment**

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## **Abstract**

Australian workplaces are experiencing substantial challenges because of population ageing. In addition, the labour market is highly competitive, so organisations need to offer competitive employment terms and conditions to attract, engage and retain talented employees. Paralleling this is evidence of the need for workplace flexibility, with organisations requiring greater structural flexibility to increase efficiencies and productivity, and individuals wanting flexible working arrangements for work-life balance. Literature indicates that different generations hold different expectations and aspirations about work.

Strategic Human Resource Management [SHRM] theory prescribes that organisations should align their workforces to meet organisational goals, with workforce policies determined by the senior executive. Literature addressing current workforce challenges is deficient in addressing public sector workforce management, particularly the different environment in which it exists and operates. This literature fails to recognise the importance and value of how managers' and employees' perceptions about their employment can contribute to determining appropriate workforce policies to achieve sustainable workforces.

The current research examined attraction, engagement and retention in public sector Agencies, using in-depth interviews with public sector employees and managers to record their perceptions about their employment prior to commencement and currently, and the factors influencing their ongoing service. A survey of public sector Agencies assessed the types and level of alignment of Human Resources [HR] practices and policies against the themes of attraction, engagement and retention.

The findings show that employees' perceptions about their employment are more cohesive than the literature indicates. The need for job security, challenging work and community contribution were values shared by participants, but their interpretations varied. Employee results were compared with managers' perceptions and the Agency survey findings to identify what attraction, engagement and retention factors are held to be valuable and whether there was an alignment with organisational policies and practices. The findings highlight the need for a considered organisational approach that incorporates employees' and managers' perceptions about their employment. The results contribute to understanding how public services can manage and sustain their workforces by developing appropriate HR practices and policies.

This study was unique in that it drew evidence from employees' and managers' perceptions about attraction, engagement and retention, and contrasted this with organisational policies and practices. The importance of informal flexible workplace arrangements was a key finding. The research adds to the emerging body of knowledge regarding workforce management, particularly how knowledge of employees' perceptions can contribute to building effective policies that meet individual and organisational needs.

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## Abbreviations

AARP	American Association of Retired Persons
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACIRRT	Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training
AHRI	Australian Human Resources Institute
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
APS	Australian Public Service
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
AWALI	Australian Work and Life Index
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Professional Development
DCAC	Demographic Change Advisory Council
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Commonwealth government)
EEONA	Equal Employment Opportunity Network of Australia
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
OSSC	Office of the State Service Commissioner (State government - Tasmania)
PSMO	Public Sector Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmanian State Government
SSALS	State Service Accumulated Leave Scheme
SSA-Vic	State Service Authority - Victoria (State government)
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
TSS	Tasmanian State Service
WP	Workforce Planning



## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the focus and the rationale for the research project. It will first detail the research background and context by describing changes to the age distribution in the Australian population. It will then discuss how in recent years the employment landscape has also altered in terms of employment contracts and, therefore, employment relationships. Employment patterns and participation will be shown to have adapted to changing markets and management practices. The subsequent section then explains the research aim and the research questions, and also briefly outlines the research design. The structure of the thesis is described and concluding comments made.

### **1.2 Age and work in Australia**

Australian society is currently experiencing structural ageing caused by a declining proportion of younger people and changing birth rates and migration patterns. The proportions of older age groups in the population (and workforce) have increased (Syed, 2006; Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2007; Rolland, 2007). The ageing trend is expected to continue for the next half century (Syed, 2006). Sayers (2006) also noted that in the workforce today, for the first time, there are four different generations, which has altered the expectations and aspirations of employees and their employers.

The ABS (2008) described how the population in 1956 had a very different age composition. In 1956, the proportion of the population aged 0 to 14 years represented 29.4 per cent; in 2006 this was only 19.6 per cent, and in 1956 people aged 15 to 64 years represented 62.2 per cent of the population, whereas in 2006 this had increased to 67.5 per cent (ABS, 2008). While this shows a sharp increase in the 'working' age group of the population, it doesn't identify that the proportion of the population aged 65 years or older has changed from 8.9% in 1956 to 13% in 2006 (ABS, 2008). This cohort is expected to substantially increase: it is estimated that, by 2021, nearly a quarter of Australia's population will be over 65 years of age, similar to predictions for other industrialised countries (The Working Group of the Directorate of Social Issues, 2000; Healy, 2004; ABS, 2007).

If 65 years of age is deemed to be when people retire (Rolland, 2007), this raises the prospect of having a high dependency ratio. At present in the Australian population there is one person not working to every five people who are working (two not working to ten working) (Healy, 2004). By 2020 this is expected to be six people not working to

every ten people working and by 2040 this is expected to increase to seven non-working people for every ten people working (Reday-Mulvey, 2005, p. 17). This has implications for how the workforce will be structured and raises the question of how demands for labour will be met, given the significant numbers of older people and the reduction of young people in the population and, therefore, the workforce.

Given the predictions for population ageing, the Demographic Change Advisory Council [DCAC] (2008) found that as the workforce ages and the number of young people entering the labour market begins to decline, the capacity to maintain the supply of labour will be critical for economic wellbeing. With skills shortages currently experienced and being forecast into the future there is a real concern for the ability of organisations to recruit and maintain their workforce capacity (the Department of Employment & Workplace Relations [DEWR], 2005; Allan, 2008; Faoro, 2008).

The Tasmanian population is expected to age more rapidly compared to national patterns, with a decline of some 14% in the youth population and, at the same time, an increase in the proportion of people aged over 65 years of almost 80% (DCAC, 2007). This has significant implications for private and public sectors for maintaining economic wellbeing and productivity. Tasmania has an older population than other states with a median age of 39 years compared to a national average of 37 years (ABS, 2006). The Tasmanian population is expected to reach a peak of 322,000 in 2012 and then decline by around 20% over the next 40 years (DCAC, 2007). The current Tasmanian dependency rate is two people in work for each person not working is expected to change to one person working to one not working, which has implications for economic growth and public sector services (DCAC, 2007).

National employment patterns have also changed, with more women now in the workforce, an increase of 54% from 1986 to 2006 and a decrease from 75% to 72% of men in the workforce for the same period (Draper, 2008). As noted by the ABS (2007a), the increase of women in the workforce has corresponded with changes to full-time, part-time and casual employment across most industry sectors. Part-time employment increased by over 36% between 1998 and 2008 (ABS, 2008a) with 15% of men aged over 45 years, compared to 46% of women aged over 45 years, working part-time. Participation in part-time work for younger people has also increased, with 66% of young people aged 15 to 19 years; and 54% of people aged over 65 years of age working part-time (ABS, 2008a). At least one third of women in all age groups work part-time and, considering the increase in the workforce of this group, predicted



demographic changes may also influence this pattern of workforce participation (ABS, 2008a).

Ageing populations, ageing workforces and different generations in the workforce will all effect significant changes to the composition and agility of the workforce in the coming years. Therefore, organisational HR practices and policies need to be informed by systematic evidence as to the effectiveness of attraction, engagement and retention measures if organisations are to remain viable. Research is needed to understand how these identified factors will contribute to shaping future workforces and how organisations will adapt their employment arrangements accordingly.

With an ageing population, the meaning of retirement warrants further consideration when trying to understand how the composition of the workforce may or will alter and how this will impact on organisations and their ability to maintain their workforces. Changing retirement patterns means different factors that influence individuals' decisions whether to retire or remain in the workforce (Jackson, Walter, Felmingham & Spinaze, 2006; Rolland, 2007; Shacklock, 2009).

Research by Shacklock (2009), Perry (2001) and Jackson et al (2006) regarding older employees and their reasons for leaving or remaining in the workforce has highlighted the importance and need to understand employee decisions in determining how workforce sustainability is to be attained or maintained . The variables that impact on individuals' decision-making varies greatly, and include family responsibilities, health and financial status, enjoyment at work, remuneration and other work-related benefits (Jackson et al, 2006; Rolland, 2007; Smyer & Pitt-Catsoupes, 2007; Shacklock, 2009). Contemporary literature also highlights the impact that organisational restructuring decisions, and technological and market changes have on older employees and the barriers they face in obtaining employment (Patrickson & Ranzijn, 2004; Ranzijn, 2005).

Current research and literature about work for older people highlights the importance of access to flexible working arrangements as a key component to making decisions about retiring, re-entering the workforce post-retirement and about continuing in employment (Loretto, Vickerstaff & White, 2005; Jackson et al 2006; Warren, 2008). The need for flexible work arrangements prior to retirement age is also supported by Rolland (2007). These factors contribute both to individuals' decisions regarding their employment and how organisations should provide for older employees. Research suggests that older employees are not committed to a set retirement age and don't have firm retirement plans or financial or activity plans post-retirement (paid or unpaid)

(ABS, 2007b; Connors, 2007). Therefore, there is a need to better understand mature-aged employees' perceptions and expectations about their employment and retirement in order to consider how organisations are to structure and manage their workforces currently and into the future.

A further factor in considering age and work is the more recent topic of generational differences. Sayers (2006) stated that today's workforce comprises four different generations, each of which brings its own values and expectations to work. A generation is comprised of people born in the same 15 to 20 year period, who face similar economic and social environments and share a number of common characteristics and experiences that shape their expectations regarding their work. Therefore, they have their own culture and traditions that are different from those of other generations (Arsenault, 2004; DCAC, 2007; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008).

Both academic and non-academic literature claims that generational differences are now such that they warrant different approaches to workforce management, structures and practices (Australian Human Resources Institute [AHRI], 2008; Packer, (2008). Kramar (2004) found that the younger generations have different expectations and aspirations about their working life and require different management styles, terms and conditions and more development, career opportunities and to work for organisations where clear values are known and workplace decisions are made in an egalitarian manner.

Workforce management is now faced with critical decisions about how to structure and manage teams, with individuals from different generational groups requiring different leave provisions and work challenges and management methods (Packer, 2008). It is also claimed that conflict in the workplace occurs because of diverse generational values and expectations and that affixing generational labels has gained acceptance, both within literature and at the workplace (AHRI, 2008).

However, research also shows that there is more conformity than division regarding generational differences. Whilst generations may have different expectations and aspirations about work, there are many common factors, with each generation expressing them differently (Jurkiewicz, 2000; Deal, 2007; Kirkpatrick, Martin & Warneke, 2008). Jurkiewicz (2000) found a homogenous pattern of what employees of all age groups in the public sector want, including the desire to work hard and do a good job as a value that employees bring to the job. However, organisational circumstance can enhance or repress the expression of the desire to work.

The above sources provide clear evidence that to have a productive workforce, age needs to be questioned as a factor in attraction, engagement and retention policies and practices to achieve workforce sustainability and productivity. Therefore, additional research is needed to further understand the influence of age on work and employment practices.

### **1.3 Changing employment relationships**

The previous section described how the workforce is changing through ageing. This section details how the employment contract has altered in order to address diversity factors such as work-life balance and flexible work arrangements. Changes to society over recent decades have impacted on how organisations structure and manage their workforces (Pocock, 2005; Warren, 2008). Workplace diversity is a term that covers a wide range of workplace arrangements to meet employee or individual needs and describes their positive impact on organisations (Cox, 1993; De Cieri & Kramar, 2003; Bourke, 2007). Organisations can benefit from a diverse workforce, as having a diverse range of people with different characteristics and needs will increase productivity, innovation and workplace productivity (Cox, 1993; De Cieri & Kramar, 2003; Bourke, 2007).

One of the identified diversity needs or outcomes has been work-life balance, even though there is difficulty in defining what it means and what arrangements in the workplace actually support work-life balance (Houston, 2005; Major & Germano, 2006; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008). As noted by the State Service Authority-Victoria [SSA-Vic] (2005, p. 6), work-life balance provisions have developed from family-friendly policies, but now include employees with and without caring responsibilities. Employees increasingly want the right to quality work as well as time for individual pursuits such as contributing to the community, participating in leisure activities, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, studying and being active family members (SSA-Vic, 2005; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008; Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

SSA-Vic (2005, p. 13) identified that to compete effectively, businesses increasingly need to ensure higher levels of productivity and progressively flexible workforces that can respond quickly to changing organisational demands. Competitive pressures have also increased the need for employers to foster more innovative, collaborative and productive workplaces through appropriate and effective HR policies and practices (SSA-Vic, 2005). This means that employers need to compete for skilled, productive and committed employees, and to do this they need to offer various ways for employees to balance work-life commitments.

The literature portrays work-life balance as one of the central components of organisational workforce policies that attract, engage and retain employees (Shoptaugh, Phelps & Visio, 2004; Kramar, 2006; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008). The real challenge for organisations is to identify different ways in which work can be undertaken, but the array and types of formal and informal flexibility and other work-life balance provisions are difficult to implement and measure (Bourke, 2007). According to Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 228):

The bottom-line of work-life balance research is whether organisations can improve working conditions and subsequent levels of work-life satisfaction in employees in order to attract, motivate and retain their workforce.

Workplace provisions for work-life balance appear to be a major contributor to employees' level of job satisfaction, and therefore these provisions need to be available to employees across different employment categories and industries. Provisions for work-life balance and flexible working arrangements can assist in reducing turnover, thereby increasing retention and productivity (McCuiston, Wooldridge & Pierce, 2004; The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD], 2005; Poelmans, Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Bardoel, De Cieri and Mayson (2008) and Duxbury and Higgins (2008) concur with these findings, but also identify that employees' relationships with their managers is important in determining the level of satisfaction with work-life balance and flexible work arrangements.

At the organisational level, HR needs to be responsive and innovative in managing the workforce and the range of flexible work provisions that support employees' work-life balance (Calderon, 2009). This also extends to employees' perceptions, where such options may not be accessed but do contribute to employee engagement and retention (Bourke & Russell, 2009). Work-life arrangements need to suit the particular needs of a workplace and its employees—there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model (SSA-Vic, 2005; Burke, 2006; Bardoel, De Cieri & Santos, 2008; Yuile, Chang, Gudmundsson, & Sawang, 2012). Therein lies one of the major challenges for contemporary organisations in managing effective and sustainable workforces. Erickson (2008) stated that business organisations and employment policies will have to adapt to the needs of the changing workforce; and that increasing shortages of workers with key skills will require even the most traditional companies to change, or face the likelihood that their growth will be constrained by a lack of talent. Hence, additional research is required to better understand these shifts in employment relationships and how organisations and individuals perceive work-life balance and flexible work arrangements.

At the core, the relationship between workers and the organisers of work will be redefined (Erickson, 2008). Organisations need to be able to offer factors such as challenging work, competitive pay, work-life balance and flexible work provisions, career advancement opportunities and reward and recognition programs to attract, engage and retain employees (Sayers, 2006; Rolland, 2007; Westacott, 2007; Asquith, Sardo & Begley, 2008). Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003). Hull and Read (2003) and Sayers (2006) have undertaken research to investigate and examine what structures and provisions provide the necessary levels of attraction, engagement and retention. However, as described by Kramar (2006a), there is limited evidence of which bundles are the 'right' HR practices and policies that should be designed and implemented, and whether these are able to be deployed across industry sectors or occupational groups with the same outcome.

#### **1.4 Theoretical approaches to workforce management**

An organisation's human resource management (HRM) practices and principles provide the environment in which employment terms and conditions and management practices are designed, managed and implemented. HRM encompasses what jobs will be done, by whom, when and how; and also what terms and conditions are applied to employment (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 3). HRM is also about how people are managed in organisations, from the initial application or recruitment stage through to their leaving the organisation (Stone, 2002; Kramar, 2006; Boxall & Purcell, 2008).

Theorists (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle & Collins, 2001; Ulrich, 2007; Boxall & Purcell, 2008) argue that HRM is about building both 'human capital' (what individuals know and can do that is valuable to the firm) and 'social capital' (relationships and networks among individuals and groups that create value to the firm). One of the most important changes to HR in recent years has been its adoption of a strategic approach, which allows it to extend beyond its traditional activities of delivering HR to aligning HR activities with organisational goals (Kramar, 2006a; Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Wright and McMahan (1992, p. 298) define Strategic Human Resource Management [SHRM] as '... the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organisation to achieve its goals'.

Several theoretical approaches have been used to explain the link between people-management and business performance. A 'best practice approach' theory argues that a set of HR policies will contribute to high organisational performance in all situations, measured against other organisations, with a focus on a high-performance work system (Kramar, 2006a, p. 29). This requires understanding other organisational

policies and practices and, more importantly, the environment in which they operate. It may not be appropriate to adopt an industry-specific approach to HR practice and management, as industry barriers and challenges will differ.

Best practice provides a point-in-time perspective and is a 'now' focus, which may impede or discolour the long-term planning and delivery of HR, but the key to organisational performance lies in selecting 'bundles' of HR policies that support the strategy, culture and other functional strategies (Kramar, 2006a, p. 30). These 'bundles' of HR policies, then, become extremely important in their selection, design and implementation; as is the need to consider the environment, organisational culture and longer term goals, challenges and barriers.

Another approach is contingency theory, where corporate performance depends (or is contingent) upon a variety of factors (Meznar & Johnson, 2005). Specifically, organisations must consider their internal capabilities, as well as external conditions, and there is no single 'right' strategy that organisations should pursue. Therefore, a contingency perspective of SHRM would emphasise the importance of the role of HR or SHRM in regards to the strategies adopted to meet the alignment of the workforce with organisational goals. Therefore, considering the changes to the employment landscape because of employee ageing, work-life balance needs and flexible work arrangements, research is needed into employee views that could influence the composition of HR policies and practices.

The thesis details a number of theoretical approaches to public sector management. Academic research has resulted in different views as to whether the public sector differs from the private sector with regards to workforce management. Teo and Rodwell's (2007) study of Australian public sector organisations found a number of questions relating to the strategic role of HR and its relationship with senior management and line managers. Walsh, Bryson and Lonti's (2002, p. 177) study of public and private sectors found that whilst there were similarities between the sectors, there were also significant differences, mainly evidenced by the much greater degree of formalisation of the HR systems in public sector organisations and a greater emphasis on control. Changes to the public sector over the last two decades have had a significant impact on employees and the conditions under which people work: there has been attention paid to the specific field of HRM research and academic inquiry in relation to the public sector (Brown, 2004, p. 304). SHRM holds considerable promise for improving government performance by aligning workforce activities and structures with organisational goals (Tompkins, 2002). Brown (2004) agrees with the sectoral

differences about Human Resource Management (HRM) but claims that in the public sector the focus is on outcomes other than market share or profit and therefore SHRM or HRM may need to be structured differently in terms of having HRM as a strategic (or pivotal) partner.

Management of people resources is also considered to be different between private and public sectors. 'Public sector organisations have become a paradigm case of how much can go wrong with HRM within the management process' according to Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 218).

A large part of the difficulties experienced in the quality of employee relations in the public sector occurs because governments (in effect, the owners) change frequently, introducing new philosophies, policy requirements and senior leaders.

Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 218)

What the literature highlights is that for public or private sector organisations, the key is to develop HR strategies that attract, develop and retain essential employees and to understand what motivates them (Holland, Sheehan, Donoghue & Pyman, 2007, p. 21).

Many studies adopt a managerial perspective, rather than an employee perspective (Townsend, Wilkinson, Allan & Bamber, 2011), involving an assessment or analysis of quantitative data, including financial costing or HRM data such as turnover rates or replacement costs. But this does not contribute to arriving at the right or effective bundle of HR policies. Townsend et al (2011) stated that there is value in asking employees in the workplace about their views as a potential means of understanding HRM or SHRM issues. Edgar and Geare (2005a, p. 361) stated that most research and reporting of HRM has ignored the view of employees, and that employee attitudes are keen measures of HRM effectiveness.

Employees' perceptions about their employment can provide key information about current HR policies and practices (Guest, 1999, 2007; Gibb, 2001; Edgar & Geare, 2005, 2005a). Therefore, for SHRM to be implemented successfully there is a strong need to align employee needs (drawn from or based on employee perceptions) with organisational HR policies and practices. The ability to obtain information about employees' perceptions of their employment provides an opportunity to explore what HR policies and practices are valued.

## **1.5 Rationale for the research**

The current research examines attraction, engagement and retention factors using the common elements identified in the literature (Boxall, 1998; Australian Public Service and Merit Protection Commission, 2004; Murray & Syed, 2005; Sayers, 2006; Avery & McKay, 2007; Bourke, 2008; Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Towers Perrin, 2008). The rationale for the research is based on the lack of previous employee research aimed at gaining 'employee voice' undertaken across the Agencies of an Australian State Service (jurisdiction) regarding their values or expectations about job satisfaction, work performance, commitment and motivation. Further, the research explores whether employees of different ages and lifestyles have differing perceptions of workforce management policies and practices. Limited research has been undertaken regarding contemporary HR or workforce challenges across state or public service jurisdictions in Australia (Ives, 1995; Tompkins, 2002; Freyens, 2010). Considering the changing work constructs and management practices regarding both employees' and managers' values and expectations, further research and analysis is therefore warranted.

The purpose of the research is to explore how public sector jurisdictions approach contemporary workforce management challenges. There is an opportunity to explore employees' perceptions concerning attraction, engagement and retention and how this could contribute to a better understanding of how public sectors can structure and manage their workforces. The research will involve eliciting employees' perceptions in order to examine how such perceptions can inform and extend HR policies and practices; provide a foundation for identifying and understanding what is valued by employees with regard to their employment; and better understand the value of HR policies and practices for employees and how the management of these policies and practices can be improved to meet both employee and organisational needs.

## **1.6 Research aim and design**

It is the intention of the research to identify the degree of alignment about workplace policies and practices across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations. The research questions are:

1. What attraction, engagement and retention factors do employees perceive as being valuable? Do these factors vary depending on employees' age?
2. What do managers believe their employees value about their employment in terms of attraction, engagement and retention?
3. Which attraction, engagement and retention factors are evidenced in Agency HR policies and practices?



Organisations in this context are titled Agencies and are Departments in the Tasmanian State Government. The research is designed with the aim of answering the research questions regarding the key elements relating to workplace attraction, engagement and retention of public sector employees. A mixed-method approach will be used, involving a qualitative framework and using employee and manager interviews and Agency surveys to gather the data. The qualitative components allow for an in-depth exploration of employee and manager perceptions and the survey component allows for information to be gathered from Agencies representing almost the entire public sector.

To address the first research question, the different understandings and meanings of working life are explored for employees using in-depth interviews. This provides the opportunity to explore emerging themes for individual participants. The use of face-to-face interviews allows for a better understanding of employees' views across a range of questions relating to their employment terms and conditions, management styles and ongoing expectations regarding their employment.

The second research question involves the interviewing of managers in order to gain an understanding of how they perceived their employees' views and values regarding employment. In addition, this research question seeks to explore how managers view their organisation's policies and practices, and to explore what managers perceive as challenges for the ongoing management of their work areas. The third research question involves an Agency survey to assess the level and type of formal policies and practices concerning current and anticipated future work-life balance provisions, including working arrangements and future indicators for sustaining workforce participation and activity.

The findings from each research group will be compared and contrasted with those from the other groups to determine their level of alignment. From this, the research findings will be considered within an SHRM framework in order to answer whether public sector organisations can sustainably structure their workforce management in light of the identified challenges to achieve organisational goals and employee needs.

## **1.7 Research setting**

As noted above, structures of public organisations differ from those of the private sector and are policy-driven in their goals and operation. Whilst previous research (Harel & Tzafrir, 2001; Tompkins, 2002; Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Boxall & Purcell, 2008) has explored these differences at a broad level, there has been limited research across

a public jurisdiction that draws on 'employee voice' for examining and understanding public sector workforce expectations, policies and management. The absence of this type of research provides an opportunity to contribute to current literature.

The Tasmanian State Service (TSS) was chosen for the research setting because it differs from public sectors in other states. Tasmania's geographic location results in an isolated labour market. The TSS workforce, comprising over 200 different occupational groups, is located at many centres across the state, and has Agencies that range in size from as few as 43 employees to over 12,000 (Office of the State Service Commissioner, 2010). The research setting, therefore, consists of a number of public sector Agencies within the one state jurisdiction. Exploring the perceptions of employees from different-sized Agencies assists in identifying common elements and in scoping the effects of other variables, including age, length of service, occupational group and work location.

## **1.8 Thesis structure**

There are eight chapters in this thesis. This chapter has outlined the research background and detailed the rationale for the research, including its aim and the research setting.

The role and meaning of work is explored in Chapter Two, which describes and examines the importance of the employment relationship, including an understanding of psychological contracts, job satisfaction and motivation. The themes of attraction, engagement and retention are also details and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the importance of these elements with regard to attaining and maintaining organisational sustainability.

Chapter Three details how and why Australia's population and workforce are ageing. It also presents information about changes to the Tasmanian population and workforce. It extends into a discussion of how ageing is affecting workforces in terms of having a large cohort of aged employees with the potential for a substantial number of exits, because of anticipated retirement patterns and options for flexible work arrangements. The chapter closes with a discussion about the different employment expectations of different age groups.

Chapter Four explains the reasons for changes to the employment landscape. Concepts about work-life balance are discussed, along with the growing requirement by organisations and individuals for flexible work arrangements. The benefits and outcomes of work-life balance provisions are discussed, along with barriers to

implementation. The roles of human resource management are also detailed and examined.

Chapter Five describes the theoretical framework for workforce management and underpins the thesis and research focus. SHRM is described and detailed in order to understand how theory provides an explanation and approach to effective workplace management. Additional theoretical approaches, including contingency theory, are also provided. This chapter also examines the different approaches, structures and needs of public sector workforces and how SHRM can assist public services to structure and manage their workforces.

The research aim, design and methods chosen are detailed in Chapter Six. The research questions are provided in this chapter, as well as the rationale for undertaking the research and the analytical framework adopted. The methods used to collect, manage, store, code and analyse the data are also detailed in this chapter.

Chapter Seven presents the research findings, and is structured about the three themes of attraction, engagement and retention. In addition, the chapter also presents the research findings of the two key factors affecting contemporary employment and HRM: findings about the meaning and application of work-life balance and the research findings regarding the different expectations of employees and managers from different age groups.

The findings of the research are discussed in Chapter Eight within the theoretical framework. A summary of the findings relating to attraction, engagement, retention, ageing workforce, generations at work, work-life balance and flexible work arrangements are presented and are then discussed from an SHRM perspective. The implications of the research findings for public sector organisations are considered and then discussed with regard to how SHRM can guide workforce management to meet individual and organisational goals and practices. The contributions of the research to theory and practice are detailed, as well as the parameters of the strengths and limitations of the research. Directions for future research are outlined and a conclusion is also provided to highlight the importance and contributions of the research.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter introduced the research topic and outlined the context of the research, the literature that informed the rationale for the research and hence its aim, design and methods. It also provided an outline of the thesis structure. The study is unique in its multi-level approach, drawing evidence from public sector employees, managers and

organisations in order to examine the key factors of attraction, engagement and retention for workforce sustainability.

The thesis explores how the employment landscape has changed and is continuing to change, by considering how population ageing is affecting workplaces; the shifting demands of employees to achieve work-life balance, and the contributors to job satisfaction and engagement and employees' continuing employment. This thesis contributes to the emerging body of knowledge regarding public sector workforce management, and in particular, how knowledge of employees' and managers' 'perceptions can contribute to building effective workforce policies that meet individual and organisational needs.

## **Chapter 2    Employment—theories and challenges**

### **2.1      Introduction**

This chapter first examines what ‘work’ means and provides people with, apart from remuneration, and how this informs employees’ behaviour and perceptions. Commitment and motivation are also briefly discussed in this section to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of the employment relationship.

This chapter also briefly examines theories that describe and explain the employment relationship and how organisations’ workforce management and policies are constructed and understood. The final section of this chapter identifies the contemporary workforce challenges and how they impact on an organisation’s ability to attract, engage and retain and sustainable workforce.

### **2.2      Understanding the ‘meaning of work’**

Understanding subjective meanings of work is important in considering employment and how it relates to attraction, engagement and retention. To the individual, work provides a number of key gains beyond the monetary payment for hours worked.

The experience of work can be directly or indirectly beneficial or detrimental, can provide a sense of achievement, of purpose, of fulfilment or personal and social worth; and the earnings from work provide access to other needed or desired resources, support and experiences

Winefield, Montgomery, Gault, Muller, O’Gorman, Reser and Roland (2000, p. 4)

The level of achievement, purpose and fulfilment will be dependent on a number of factors, which will change over a person’s working and personal life. These factors may include personal preference, career choices and acquired skills and knowledge in a particular industry or occupational group and may also be influenced through peoples’ personal relationships, but it cannot be assumed that these work choices or gains will remain unchanged over a person’s working life.

Declining labour market participation, changing skills and knowledge capabilities required to meet new challenges, inferred generational differences, new technologies, changing market environments and factors relating to individual and organisational needs all impact on the construct defined as ‘work’. Hence, the arrangements or construction of work is changing, both from the individual and organisational perspectives. The continually changing face and nature of work requires adaptive coping strategies (for both individuals and organisations) that allow for easier anticipated transitions from one type of work to another (Winefield et al, 2000, p. 20).

With evidence of such changes, our understanding of work is also changing. McClure and Brown's (2008) study explored the experience of belonging at work, finding that the strongest sense of belonging that emerged was the 'discovery of self' within a job. Additional elements of being invited and learning to be part of a group, wanting to be included, learning how to connect and doing meaningful work were also important. This experience of work, then, goes beyond just remuneration, to the 'discovery of self within a job' (McClure & Brown, 2008).

In meeting the challenges of these changes, organisations have had to review or reconsider their workforce policies and practices. This means addressing the demographic composition of the workforce, skills and capability requirements and how to remunerate their employees, including development or career progression opportunities. Hence, organisations need to understand employees' 'meaning of work', including motivational and commitment factors that influence employees' decisions about their employment.

### **2.3 Theories of the employment relationship**

There are a number of theoretical frameworks within which to consider the relationship between employers and employees, and the interchange within that relationship has elements of self-interest, incentive, reward and performance. Boxall and Purcell (2008, pp. 183-184) found that 'motivated capability' is the quality that organisations most need from individuals.

This means that firms must offer workers sufficient incentives to attend work and do an adequate job. Like the employer, the employee is motivated to enter an employment relationship when the benefits of doing so (such as wages, intrinsic enjoyment or social standing) outweigh the costs (such as increased stress, fatigue and travelling costs), and in the light of any alternatives to that employment (such as alternative job offers or staying at home)

Boxall & Purcell (2008, p. 183)

'There must be sufficient levels of mutuality in the relationship if employment is to be stable' according to Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 183), drawing on the writings of Barnard, 1938; Watson, 1986 and Shore, Tetrick, Taylor, Coyle-Shapiro, Liden, McLean Parks, Wolfe Morrison, Porter, Robinson, Roehling, Rousseau, Schalk, Tsui and Van Dyne, 2004. The extent to which employment relationships meet both parties' needs is, of course, variable and may be modified over time because of changing circumstances of either party (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 183).

Employer-employee relationships are seen as a class of principal-agent relationships, all of which are defined by the fact that the interests of the two parties may diverge. This is a realistic assumption: employers (principals) and employees (agents) should be seen as having mixed motives. Some of their interests overlap while others move in different directions

Boxall & Purcell (2008, p. 185)

In Agency theory it is expected 'that employers should find ways of ensuring win-win outcomes with their employees' according to Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 185). (Boxall & Purcell (2008, p. 185) state that 'in effect, agency theory, that extrinsic rewards matter to employees and that making such rewards contingent on some form of measured performance will help the [organisation] perform better'.

Job satisfaction, commitment, engagement and motivation are to some degree derived from monetary reward, but also important are development opportunities: attaining and maintaining positive working relationships and achieving a good work-life balance (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Boxall and Purcell (2008) identified the elements of motivation as being the 'individual's choice to perform, the level of effort applied and the degree of persistence'. Motivation and expectancy theories provide a different way of considering the employment relationship. Stone (2002, p. 396) stated:

...that motivation is generally defined as an internal state that induces an employee to engage in particular behaviours, or as a set of factors that cause employees to behave in certain ways. Employee motivation is the product of many interacting factors such as the culture of the organisation, management's leadership style, the structure of the organisation, job design and HR policies and practices.

The Expectancy theory relates to choice behaviour and is based on the logic that employees will do what they can when they want to. This theory argues that employees' choice of behaviour depends on the likelihood that their actions will bring about specific results that are attractive to them (Stone, 2002; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Hence, employees wishing to achieve outcomes will have expectations and a level of commitment and corresponding actions, which may advance their employment benefits. Miller and Grush (1998, p. 119) also noted the role that organisational programs have in determining employee expectations, actions and outcomes.

'Expectancy theory of motivation make the fundamental point that [employees'] ongoing motivation at work is affected by the expectations [they] form and [their] experience of whether these are met over time' (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 192). Organisations need

to gain an ongoing understanding of these factors, and like agency theory, expectancy theory holds that employees must be offered incentives that appeal to them.

... expectancy theory implies that faith in the management process is something that needs to be built and maintained over time.

Boxall and Purcell (2008, p.193)

'The critical principle here is that employees' trust and commitment to the organisation tends to be based on perceptions of fairness and trustworthiness in management decision-making' according Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 194) drawing on the writings of Guest (2007).

### **2.3.1 Employment relationships and psychological contracts**

Employment relationships extend beyond the literal contract and the mere exchange of labour for money. The role of the psychological contract is important as well, as it considers the relationship between the employee and the employer and the role of reciprocity: how the employee perceives the relationship and how the relationship will change because of individual needs or adjustments at the workplace. Therefore, it is valuable to examine this relationship in order to assess how it alters and develops and how it links to the three elements of attraction, engagement and retention. A better understanding of employment relationships provides insight into how psychological contracts may change, and, in turn how organisations need to consider their workforce policies and practices, both at a collective level and at an individual level.

The concept of the psychological contract stems from expectancy theories of motivation. As motivation is a key factor for having a productive workforce, it is appropriate to briefly outline what psychological contracts are and how they assist in understanding the overall employment relationship (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Schein (1978, p. 48) defined the psychological contract as 'a set of unwritten reciprocal expectations between an individual employee and the organisation'. 'Successful employment relationships involve matching organisational needs with individual needs' (Schein, 1977, 1978).

Psychological contracts are anything but neat bundles of well-specified terms; rather, they are highly subjective and are specific to each employee; and they concern both concrete (pay, working conditions) and abstract (security, challenge) elements of the give and take between employer and employee (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994). They are distinct from implied contracts, which are based on mutual understandings (Rousseau,



1990). Psychological contracts are part of the glue that binds employees to organisations (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994, p. 448).

Hecker and Grimmer (2006, pp. 186-187) noted four significant elements in all definitions of a 'psychological contract'. First is the incorporation of beliefs, values, expectations and aspirations of the employer and the employee, including beliefs about implicit promises and obligations; the extent to which these are perceived to be met or violated, and the extent of trust within that relationship. Second, these expectations are not necessarily made explicit. The psychological contract can be regarded as an implied deal between employers and employees, and as such it implies fairness and good faith. Third, the psychological contract can be continually re-negotiated, changing with an individual's and an employer's expectations and with shifting economic and social contexts. Significantly, it is not a static thing and the dynamic nature of the interplay between employer and employee influences the outcomes of this relationship. Fourth, the centrality of an individual's beliefs about the psychological contract means that individuals in the same organisation or job may perceive and hold different psychological contracts, which will in turn influence the ways in which they perceive organisational events.

Hecker and Grimmer (2006, p. 199) also wrote that the psychological contract is useful for understanding perceived entitlement to work-life benefits and flexible working arrangements. Work-life policies and practices have been associated with measures of employee satisfaction, loyalty and commitment (Hecker & Grimmer, 2006, p. 202). The distinction Hecker and Grimmer (2006) made is that the concept of fairness, rather than uniformity, should be an organisational goal in employment contracts. This aligns with other findings that organisations should not aim for a one-size-fits-all approach (Kramar, 2006; Toten, 2006).

The role of an organisation's HR practices and policies, along with management styles and practices, is significant to employees and their assessment of the status of their psychological contracts, and is a consequence of the systematic, deep processing of what HR practices communicate to those employees (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994, p. 456). Organisational HR practices influence employee commitment. That is, employee loyalty, acceptance of important organisational goals and values and willingness to stick with the firm reflect, to an appreciable degree, the impact of HR practices. How employees interpret and make sense of their employer's HR practices affect their psychological contracts with their employers and ultimately their commitment (Guzzo & Noonan, 1994, p. 447). Therefore, an organisation must not only have an effective

'bundle' of HR practices and policies but must ensure effective communication and a process of evaluating and reviewing them in regard to access, entitlement and fairness.

## **2.4 Employment relationships—attraction, engagement and retention**

'The capacity to offer better pay and greater internal development makes it easier for [organisations]' according to Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 177) with '...some firms competing for scarce talent are developing an 'employment value proposition'; a formal statement of the particular benefits they can offer potential recruits' (Boxall and Purcell, 2008, p. 177 citing Wooldridge, 2006, p. 16). Remuneration strategies and employment-value propositions impact on attraction, engagement and retention. Erickson (2008) agreed, adding that business organisations and employment policies will have to adapt to the needs and values of the changing workforce; and increasing shortages of workers with key skills will motivate even the most traditional companies to adapt, or face the likelihood that their growth will be constrained by a lack of talent. At the core, the relationship between workers and the organisers of work will be redefined and these shifts will both allow and reinforce employees' greater personal flexibility, autonomy and participation (Erickson, 2008).

Therefore, not only will employment policies and practices need to be adjusted, but also the content and provisions within the employment contract, which will impact on the way work is arranged, allocated and managed. Addressing these challenges requires a new approach to where, how and when work is done, with a focus on outcomes, not hours worked. Flexible workplace policies and practices will be needed; however, it is considerably more challenging to create a culture that supports, moreover encourage, such practices (Shewry, 2007).

### **2.4.1 Attraction**

The ability to attract the right people has become an imperative for many organisations that have had to structure their recruitment practices and strategies in order to compete in a competitive market. Recruitment is the process of attempting to locate and encourage potential applicants to apply for existing or anticipated job vacancies (Nankervis, Compton & Baird, 2005, p. 177). 'Employer branding' has been one response organisations have used to effectively compete in a tight labour market and, as noted by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p. 501):

... firms are using employer branding to attract recruits and assure that current employees are engaged in the culture of strategy of the firm.

Employer branding is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regard to a particular organisation (Sullivan, 2004, p. 1). Employer branding is a key strategy for organisations to put their employment value proposition to potential employees and to continue to attract, and therefore engage, employees.

Recruitment (and attraction) strategies flow ultimately from the organisation's mission statement and strategic objectives (Nankervis, Compton & Baird, 2005, p. 178). How an organisation translates this into attraction will depend on a number of factors, including resources able to be used for attraction and recruitment, the type of positions and qualifications required and the location of the organisation; as well as remuneration arrangements and the culture and management of the organisation.

Presenting organisations as being good places to work is becoming more important, and as Nankervis, Compton and Baird (2005) stated, the so-called 'war for talent' has resulted in employers being known as 'employer of choice' to attract the best talent. Employers need to actively espouse the value of working in their organisations, and one of the noted variations is how potential applicants now consider the reputation, roles and goals of an organisation.

Attraction strategies need to encompass many factors, including employment conditions, organisational values, and training and promotion opportunities. This is noted by Towers Perrin (2008) in its Global Workforce Study (involving a survey of nearly 90,000 employees working in 18 countries), which found the top drivers of attraction to be competitive base pay, convenient work location, vacation and time off, career advancement opportunities, learning and development opportunities, reputation of the organisation as a good employer, challenging work, reasonable workload, flexible schedules and competitive retirement benefits. These factors may vary depending on the industry, the organisation, the position and its classification and type and individuals' preferences.

The attraction and recruitment challenge is made more complex for the public sector because of the breadth of its responsibilities and its highly skilled, diverse and dispersed workforce (SSA-Vic, 2008, p. 13). SSA-Vic (2005) reported on recent research that explored community perceptions of the Victorian Public Service as a career choice, the key findings being that many who seek to work for the public service are motivated by a set of highly regarded values that revolve around working for the greater good of the community; that key working conditions are perceived as more favourable in the public service, and are seen as a trade-off against potentially lower

salaries. There is a strong recognition of the flexible work arrangements that are available and, on the down side, external job seekers often hold negative perceptions of a 'generic, bland, regimented and conservative workforce' with a 'culture of bureaucracy' similar to what they believed existed in the 1950s (SSA-Vic, 2005, 2008).

According to Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007, p. 70) 'employees in the public sector often make a choice to deliver a worthwhile service to society; they are motivated by strong desires to serve the public interest and are significantly more motivated by a balanced work-family relationship'.

Worrall, Cooper and Campbell-Jamison (2000) found that many people join the public sector because they had a public service ethos, because they were prepared to sacrifice higher income for higher perceived long-term job security. These research findings highlight potential applicants' expectations of the range of employment terms and conditions, working arrangements, management styles and, in the public sector, the ability to contribute to society.

Additional research is warranted to explore whether employees' perceptions change from the time of application to appointment and during their period of employment. Initial attractors may or may not last into the employment phase, and additional research that could assist in providing a deeper understanding is required for assessing engagement factors and levels.

#### **2.4.2 Engagement**

Recently, employee engagement has received increased attention, with focus on the drivers for better performance, increased commitment and motivation. There are a number of different definitions of employee engagement and, as each study will examine employee engagement under a different protocol, a common definition may be difficult (Kular, Gatenby, Rees, & Soane, 2008; Macey & Schneider, 2008). SSA-Vic (2008, p. 13) defined employee engagement as:

... the extent to which employees commit to something or someone in their organisation, how hard they work, and how long they stay as a result of that commitment; and as such, it is linked to productivity, workforce culture and retention outcomes.

Pitt-Catsouphe and Matz-Costa (2008, p. 216) stated that:

... the concept of engagement refers to a state in which employees find meaning in their work and covers a broad range of areas, for example, the tasks or duties undertaken, relationships with co-workers, management practices, the culture, workplace environment, flexibility and remuneration.

Kular et al (2008) noted that individual differences play a vital role in determining an employee's potential level of engagement. Therefore, organisations need to acknowledge this and ensure that engagement potential is not lost, which would also reduce productivity. Engagement is not simply an outcome of people's own intrinsic levels of motivation or desire to reach their own personal goals (Towers Perrin, 2008b). Engagement is fostered through the employment relationship and through the ability of the organisation to connect with the individuals' abilities and to successfully match this with individual and organisational goals. Work relationships also play a major role in engagement levels, as noted by Kular et al (2008), and therefore relationships with colleagues, managers and clients will alter over time and will either further enhance or detract from an individual's level of engagement. Therefore, management must be able to gauge working relationships, not only in terms of work production undertaken by groups of employees, but also the relationships within and across teams.

The responsibility of organisational HR to achieve and continuously deliver an effective bundle of HR practices to attain high levels of workforce engagement is difficult, considering the range of factors that contribute to engagement. Enhancing employee commitment (and engagement) requires HR to deliver tools, systems and processes; line managers also play a critical role, according to the Boston Consulting Group and the World Federation of Personnel Management (2008). There is an opportunity to further research the importance of line managers in delivering and contributing to good HR policy and practice (Edgar & Geare, 2005; Patterson, West, Shackleton, Dawson, Lawthorn, Maitlis, Robinson & Wallace, 2005).

Engagement surveys or climate surveys are one of the tools that organisations have implemented in order to assess or measure engagement, and are undertaken regularly by many organisations. The results of surveys are used to assess areas of engagement that may require additional or revised HR policies or strategies (Kular et al, 2008; Brickner & Dettmann, 2009). Engagement surveys can contribute valuable information, and being able to assess differences and similarities in the responses of different employee groups (age, work level, job type, and employment category) will provide further in-depth information that can assist organisations in developing and implementing an effective bundle of HR practices and policies to achieve high levels of engagement.

Engagement surveys can be used to measure the effectiveness of HR policies and practices from a macro level (general measure of engagement) and to measure engagement levels for specific policies or practices. They may measure people's

satisfaction with work-life balance provisions or flexible employment arrangements (Parkes & Langford, 2008; Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008). The type of survey instruments employed may use quantitative or qualitative measures, and the value of each needs to be considered for its benefits.

### **2.4.3 Retention**

Employee retention has become an increasingly important focus for organisations, considering tight labour markets, the costs of recruitment and turnover and the costs of training employees. Organisational investment in employee retention is critical if an organisation wants to keep its 'right' people; yet retention is not merely the absence of turnover. The Hudson Report (2007, p. 5) defined retention as the ability of an organisation to keep its most precious resource: 'its people'. All organisations experience some level of employee turnover; however, retention is about keeping those employees who are critical to the sustained success and growth of the business. The growing focus on retention by organisations is noted by Evans (2008, p. 13), reporting that AHRI's HR Pulse Survey on Retention (completed by senior managers and HR practitioners), which found that 60% of respondents admitted that they had a problem retaining staff and 80% reported that retention problems had caused impacts on organisational effectiveness and financial performance.

The cost involved in replacing a separating employee and training a replacement, plus the reduced productivity in the initial employment period, also need to be considered when examining or addressing employee separation. Midalia (2008) stated that the cost of hiring, training a new employee and knowledge management costs commonly represent 150% of a departing employee's salary.

Asquith, Sardo and Begley (2008), undertook a Pulse Survey of AHRI's membership base (of senior managers and HR practitioners) on retention issues and found that reasons for leaving an organisation differed slightly depending on the size of the organisation, however, lack of promotion, inadequate pay and poor work-life balance were all highly indicated regardless of the organisational size. Asquith, Sardo and Begley (2008, p. 9) found that 36% of survey respondents considered the relationship between employees and their managers as the key reason for leaving their employment. Branham (2005, p. 58) supported a Gallup study conclusion that the greatest drivers of employee engagement and retention are intangible and mostly related to the way managers treat employees. HRM can reduce turnover; but the ability to retain employees depends significantly upon the ability to manage them (Kalisprasad, 2006, p. 22). This suggests that organisations need to be cognisant of

the importance of this relationship and how to develop managerial capability and measure managers' performance.

Linked to retention is the need for a workforce management system that addresses employee or career development opportunities and that assists with succession and capability planning. According to the Boston Consulting Group and the World Federation of Personnel Management (2008), in developing and retaining the best employees, organisations have to focus on managing talent, improving leadership development and managing work-life balance. Managing work-life balance is now essential for creating an attractive 'HR brand' for recruiting and retaining employees.

Westacott (2007, p. 897) identified lack of job satisfaction as the major reason for employees leaving an organisation and that dissatisfaction stemmed from: employees not having a clear and coherent organisational direction; the lack of strong, open and effective leadership; a lack of a clear understanding of the requirements of the role; the lack of a clear understanding of managers' expectations of their performance in the role; the lack of a clear understanding of how the role fits into the activities of the organisation; and the lack of the appropriate skills and competencies to perform the role effectively. In addition to this, Westacott (2007) also found other factors that influence a person's job satisfaction and decision to leave included: the absence of a clear organisational structure where reporting lines are apparent; the lack of a reasonable number of responsibilities that an employee is capable of fulfilling in the time available; lack of variety in their role, thereby making the job boring and unfulfilling; lack of recognition; the absence of regular and timely feedback on performance; and an inability to attain a work-life balance because of long hours or excessive travel requirements (whether these are imposed by the role or by the location of the job in relation to the employee's residence). Many of the factors listed are also identified in engagement and are contributors to job satisfaction; and therefore also bear on engagement and retention.

Westacott (2007), writing about employee retention, noted that research indicated that what employees most want is interesting work, full appreciation of work performed, and a feeling of 'being in on things'. The motivational reasons for employee attendance were based on the nature of work, job satisfaction, job security, location, pay and benefits and career advancement possibilities. Reasons why employees leave were identified as poor relationships with their managers, inappropriate organisational culture, poor organisational communication practices, inappropriate pay and benefits, ineffective reward practices and lack of effective or appropriate recognition.

Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003) noted from their cross-sectional research undertaken in New Zealand of 549 randomly selected employees that there is increasing employment stability as people get older and as they become better paid, lending support to the idea that there are identifiable development stages affecting the careers of both men and women. In terms of the reasons for employee turnover, Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003) hold that motivation for job change is multidimensional: no one factor will explain it. There are a number of organisational factors that strongly affect employees' reasons for leaving an organisation. Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003) found that whilst interesting work is the strongest attractor and retainer, the strongest responses were about factors that involved how the workplace is managed. Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen (2003) found that over half of the respondents indicated that their desire to improve their work-life balance was their reason for changing employment.

Academic and practitioner literature has endeavoured to identify what makes employees leave or stay with organisations (Boxall, Macky and Rasmussen, 2003; Shacklock, 2005; Westacott, 2007, Asquith, Sardo & Begley, 2008). Towers Perrin's (2008a) Workforce Study identified the top retention drivers relating to organisations having excellent career advancement opportunities; satisfaction with the organisation's people decisions; the organisation's reputation for social responsibility; appropriate amount of decision-making authority to do the job well; ability to balance work and personal life; effective job training; work environment in which new ideas are encouraged; quality of work, product or service; competitive base salaries; and a belief that senior management values the workforce.

The Hudson Report (2006, p. 4) identified a number of work attributes that underpin mature-aged employees' decisions to remain in employment, including an employee's ability to work from home, access to financial advice, opportunities to mentor or coach others, working with new challenges, recognition, access to flexible working arrangements and a friendly work environment. Rolland (2007) identified similar attributes, but added leadership and job content as to why older employees continue in their employment. The common factors identified in this chapter relate to both older and younger people, and include the need for interesting or challenging work, flexibility, the right employment conditions, good management and communication.

According to Westacott (2007), a key strategy for employee retention requires managers to develop an effective relationship with each employee for whom they have direct responsibility. Effective performance expectation-setting is essentially driven



around the appropriateness and clarity of an employee's current job description. Successful organisations will focus on providing their managers with the skills, tools and opportunities to build sustainable relationships with each employee, thereby using the manager-employee relationship as a key employee-retention strategy.

TalentDrain (2005, 1) undertook research, involving HR managers and practitioners, into organisational retention practices, finding that public sector organisations reported lower turnover rates. However, the larger organisations (those with over 1,000 employees) had, in 70% of cases, turnover rates in excess of 20%. Larger organisations reported that they are more likely to perceive turnover as having a negative effect and more likely to report that they are experiencing retention difficulties. However, public sector organisations are both more likely to perceive turnover as having a positive effect, and less likely to report retention difficulties (TalentDrain, 2005). The strategies organisations may develop and implement need to be considered against the organisational context. This further identifies the need for organisations to have an effective bundle of HR or employment practices, along with good management for effective attraction, engagement and retention of their workforce.

#### **2.4.4 Attraction, engagement and retention—conclusion**

It is critical for leaders and managers to understand how to successfully attract, retain and engage employees, especially considering that the cost of recruiting, training, compensating and providing workplace services to employees has increased commensurate with the rise in technology and skilled labour shortages (Sayers, 2006, p. 53) Table 1 provides a summary of the drivers required to attract, retain and engage employees (adapted from Towers Perrin, 2003 and Sayers, 2006).

**Table 1: What it takes to attract, retain, and engage employees**

<b>Attraction Drivers</b>	<b>Engagement Drivers</b>	<b>Retention Drivers</b>
1. Health insurance (USA)	1. Senior management interest in employees	1. Career advancement opportunities
2. Competitive pay	2. Challenging work	2. Retention of high-calibre people
3. Work/life balance	3. Decision-making authority/ autonomy	3. Overall work environment
4. Superannuation	4. Customer orientation	4. Training and development of skills
5. Career advancement opportunities	5. Career advancement opportunities	5. Adequate resources to undertake job
6. Challenging work	6. Reputation of the company	6. Competitive pay
7. The calibre of co-workers	7. Collaboration with co-workers	7. Clear goals from manager
8. Pay increase linked to individual performance	8. Resources to get the job done	8. Challenging work
9. Recognition of work/feeling valued	9. Input into decision-making	9. Manager inspires enthusiasm
10. Reputation of the company	10. Senior management vision	10. Overall satisfaction with benefits needed in day-to-day life

Challenging work and career advancement opportunities are factors involved in attraction, engagement and retention. Competitive pay is noted as an attraction and retention driver, whilst work-life balance, pay increases linked to individual performance and the 'calibre' of co-workers are noted only as attraction drivers.

The above table illustrates the components of employment, for example, salary and training. The importance of relationships with managers and colleagues is identified by Hull and Read (2003, p. 25) who undertook a study (supported by the Australian Business Council, the University of New South Wales and the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training [ACIRRT]) to identify and examine workplace excellence in Australia. The focus of the research was the quality of working relationships between the people who worked in them; all the other dimensions were important, but somehow working relationships linked all of them together. Organisational strategies and practices translate across to working relationships and therefore also contribute to success in attracting, retaining and engaging employees.

Organisations therefore must have optimum HR policies and practices and ensure that senior and line managers are competent and are able to assess work allocation and productivity requirements and also their team's commitment, motivation and, in turn, their engagement. If this is positive, then the ability of an organisation to attract and retain employees strongly contributes to sustaining workforce capability and capacity.

The importance of the line manager is noted by Harney and Jordan (2008, p. 276) (drawing on the works of Truss, 2001; Currie & Proctor, 2005):

... line managers may serve as critical intermediaries in shaping the actual form HRM practices take in practice and, ultimately in shaping overall performance

This importance placed on line managers is strongly supported by Purcell and Kinnie (2007, p. 545):

Employee perceptions of HR practices are thus likely to be stronger shaped by how their managers apply these HR practices and influence the immediate work climate where they work

Purcell and Kinnie (2007, p. 545) claim that employee perceptions about HR policies and practices are linked closely to how their managers apply HR practices at the work front. Further, Purcell and Kinnie (2007) describe how these perceptions can influence the work climate which impacts on the team's commitment, productivity and in turn engagement.

Another important aspect raised here that warrants further description is commitment, because it is an essential component found within the elements of attraction, engagement and retention. As organisational workforce management policies and practices influence employee commitment, it is therefore necessary to describe the connection between commitment, job satisfaction and motivation.

Commitment to the employer varies between employees. It is affected by changing roles and work activities and different management styles and practices, which affect the maintenance, sustenance and building of employee motivation and commitment. Bishop and Dow (1997, p. 107) stated that building employee commitment to the workplace is one important goal of HRM policies and practices and that commitment significantly influences team productivity, intention to quit and willingness to help. The relationship between commitment and job satisfaction has been extensively researched (Whitener, 2001; Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2002; Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Parton & Swart, 2005). Studies of job satisfaction and of labour turnover reveal important findings about 'what workers want' (Rose, 2000; Boxall, Macky & Rasmussen, 2003).

According to Boxall and Purcell (2008, pp. 195-200), there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. 'Intrinsic sources are to do with the nature of the work itself (the extent to which the individual finds it enjoyable and interesting and how well they get on with supervisors and colleagues), while extrinsic factors are to do with benefits the job brings with it (the level of pay; the prospect of promotion; the degree of security and the

level of status and so on) as stated by Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 195). 'Intrinsic satisfaction is greater when there is a good match between the skills people have and the skills needed in their jobs' (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 200). These factors were noted in the discussion of Agency and Expectancy theory (Stone, 2002; Boxall & Purcell, 2008), and as such are valuable in trying to identify the factors of engagement, attraction and retention. Without job satisfaction, an employee will not have either the commitment or enthusiasm for work (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). This was also found by Ostroff (1992), who examined the relationship between job satisfaction, job attitudes and performance of individuals, and found that whether employees will give their services wholeheartedly to the organisation depends, in large part, on the way they feel about the job, their fellow workers and their supervisors. For Ostroff (1992), the factors relating to the work environment and interaction within it are key determinants of job satisfaction. Hence, understanding job satisfaction is essential in considering attraction, engagement and retention practices if an organisation wishes to sustain its workforce capability.

Research (Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2002; Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007) identified that there are different benefits and constraints for public sector employees, and that job satisfaction elements vary. SSA-Vic (2008, p. 21) found from its employee survey that the five most important factors that impact on employee satisfaction with their jobs were employees' relationships with their colleagues, work-life balance, job security, fair pay, and interesting/challenging work. SSA-Vic (2008) also identified that employees were generally more positive about their immediate supervisors than about senior management.

The State of Service Employee Survey Results (APSC, 2006, p. 6) identified five workplace factors that impacted most on how satisfied employees were with their jobs. Employees positively correlated their level of satisfaction with good working relationships, salary, flexible working arrangements, good managers and interesting work. This is similar to the findings of SSA-Vic, whose 2003 study found that engagement was substantially higher in the non-profit sector. People are generally attracted to the public sector with '...a sense of mission and passion, rather than from any prospect of higher pay or wealth accumulation' (Towers Perrin, 2003, p. 7).

Westacott (2007) identified lack of job satisfaction as a common, major reason why employees leave organisations, which is often a matter of employees not having a clear and coherent organisational direction; strong, open and effective leadership; a clear understanding of the requirements of the role; a clear understanding of

management's expectations of their performance in the role; and a clear understanding of how the role fits into the activities of the organisation;. Westacott (2007) also noted that employees may leave an organisation because of the lack the appropriate skills and competencies to perform the role effectively; a clear organisational structure where reporting lines are apparent; variety in their roles (thereby making the job boring and unfulfilling); recognition of their efforts; regular and timely feedback on performance; and a satisfactory level of work-life balance. The issues Westacott (2007) identified may be considered to lie outside the 'traditional' elements of employment contracts, but they relate to the ability of organisations to structure and manage their workforces effectively and efficiently.

This section has identified the importance of job satisfaction at the individual and organisational level. The complexity of job satisfaction was noted and common elements were identified in understanding the factors influencing individuals' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their employment. These factors are needed to understand the elements for attraction, engagement and retention.

Accordingly, an integrated and balanced policy approach, tailored to meet the needs of work and life today would provide a feasible public policy response to the trends of ageing, low reproductive rates and changing workforce participation and working arrangements (Jorgensen, 2005). For Jorgensen (2005), seeking to respond to the challenges posed by demographic, social and technological trends requires the incorporation of new management processes. It is important to understand how commitment, motivation and job satisfaction will contribute to how an organisation can provide effective and positive employee attraction, engagement and retention. This in turn results in a sustainable, capable and productive workforce.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter examined what 'work' means and provides people with, apart from remuneration, and how this informs employees' behaviour and perceptions. In addition, the chapter outlined a number of different theories that provide an understanding of the employment relationship and how the individual's meaning of work informs behaviour and perceptions about employment. The elements and importance of the psychological contract were also detailed and illustrated the complexity of elements involved and the importance of the relationship between employers and their employees.

It is evident from the literature detailed in this chapter that employment is complex and that employee-employer relationships are dynamic and influenced by many factors.

The meaning of work for individuals has many facets, ranging from remuneration to the benefits of ongoing development and the ability to derive satisfaction from the work undertaken, through to building and enjoyment of working in a team environment. Theoretical frameworks have highlighted the importance of the change between employees and the organisations, the managers they work for and the people they work with.

Furthermore, how organisations structure their workforce in terms of work allocation, the work environment and how the management of work contributes to an employee's perception of work has been detailed. At the individual level, employees must work within a framework of appropriate HR policies and practices if they are to feel supported, and in turn, committed and engaged at work.

Organisations need engaged employees to provide the organisation with the means and ability to meet organisational goals. Therefore, there must be an effective management structure that meets both individual and organisational goals and needs. As detailed in this chapter, it is that balance that organisations should strive for—the best match for employees and the employer. This then requires organisations to have appropriate terms and conditions of employment, management practices and styles that can adapt to the changing needs of its workforce. The needs of an organisation will also alter according to internal and external demands and challenges. The ability of an organisation to sustain its workforce is paramount for its ongoing growth and performance. Therefore, organisations need to develop implement and maintain HR policies and practices that can adjust to the changing needs of its employees and that of the organisation itself.

Chapter 5 of the thesis examines HR and SHRM in more detail and Chapters 3 and 4 provide for the changing employment relations by detailing and considering the ageing of the population and workforce and the changing needs for greater flexibility in working arrangements (employers and employees). This chapter noted the importance of having effective HR policies and practices and how these aspects form and influence an organisation's strategies and practices across the three themes of attraction, engagement and retention. There is evidence of a need to explore how the impact of these changes will require organisations to examine their HR policies and practices in order to maintain a positive and productive workforce.

The benefits employees derive from work are individually valued and will change with individual choices or needs over time; employees may hold different benefits to have different value. There is not one set of employment provisions that all employees will

need at the same time, nor value the same. Therefore, as noted in this chapter the public sector will need to shape their attraction, engagement and retention factors in order to have a sustainable and productive workforce. There is an identified need to explore how public sector organisations structure their HR policies and practices for effective attraction, engagement and retention in light of labour market competition, increasing demands by employees for flexible work arrangements and the limitations relating to the limited resources available in the public sector for workforce provisions and arrangements.

The following chapter examines population and workforce demographics and describes how ageing has changed labour market composition and, in turn, altered employment patterns, contracts and relationships.





## **Chapter 3 Age and work**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines population and workforce demographic changes and details how changes to the age distribution of employees have altered the composition of the current labour market. Population projections will reveal how population ageing will lead to changes in the labour market. Demographic shifts have already altered the labour market and competition to recruit and retain qualified and skilled employees has increased. Organisations have had to systematically structure their workforces to meet organisational goals and productivity requirements with finite resources. These factors have affected organisations' ability to successfully attract, engage and retain workforces and to plan effectively for future workforce needs and requirements.

The ageing of the population has also resulted in differences for people nearing retirement age or for people already retired. Retirement patterns and decisions are also changing, and people's choices about continuing in employment have contributed to organisations needing to adapt their workforce policies and practices. The factors affecting retirement and work will be examined in this chapter in order to assess the implications, both for individuals and organisations.

The final part of the chapter examines generational differences. Literature contains diametrically opposed views about having different age groups in the workforce. The literature will be detailed and examined in order to assess whether or not generational group differences are significant and, if so, how they will impact on individuals and organisations regarding employment provisions and workforce capability currently and into the future.

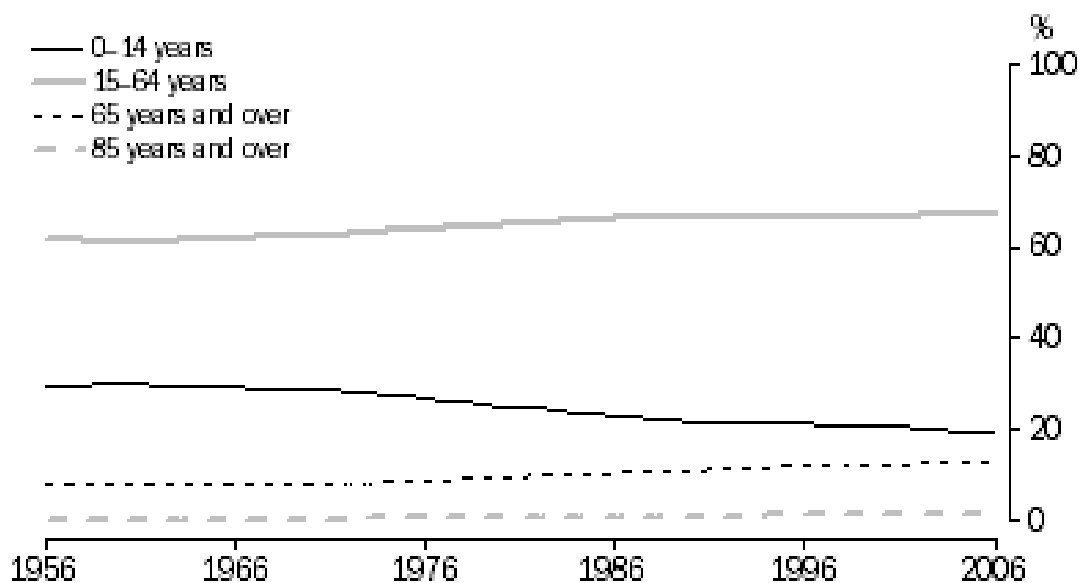
### **3.2 Australia—population and workforce demographics**

The current and projected age profiles of the Australian population have ignited discussion at local, state and national levels regarding the composition of future workforces and labour markets and about the continued public and private sector ability to deliver goods and services (Andrews, 2002; Drabsch, 2004; Business, Work & Ageing, 2005; Kryger, 2005; ABS, 2007a). The ability of the labour market to supply the demand placed upon it, as well as changes in the labour market age profile are critical factors in sustaining workforce productivity and growth (Doughney, 2003; DCAC, 2007; Rolland, 2007; Faoro, 2008). Therefore, considerable attention has been directed to labour supply and demands across industries, organisations and within academic

literature, focussing on the composition and management of current and future workforces.

Australian society is currently experiencing structural ageing caused by a declining proportion of younger people, with a resultant increase in the proportion of older age groups (Syed, 2006). This phenomenon is expected to continue for the next half century (Syed, 2006; Rolland, 2007; ABS 2007a). As shown in Figure 1, people aged 0-14 years represented 29.4% of Australia's population in 1956, while those aged 15-64 years represented 62.2%; those aged 65 years and over represented 8.4% and those aged 85 years and over represented 0.4% (ABS, 2008). Although Australia's population has continued to grow since 1956, the proportion of children aged 0-14 years decreased to 19.6% by 2006. In contrast, the proportion of people aged 15-64 years increased to 67.5% by 2006 and the proportion of the population aged 65 years and over increased to 13.0%.

**Figure 1: Australian population by age group**

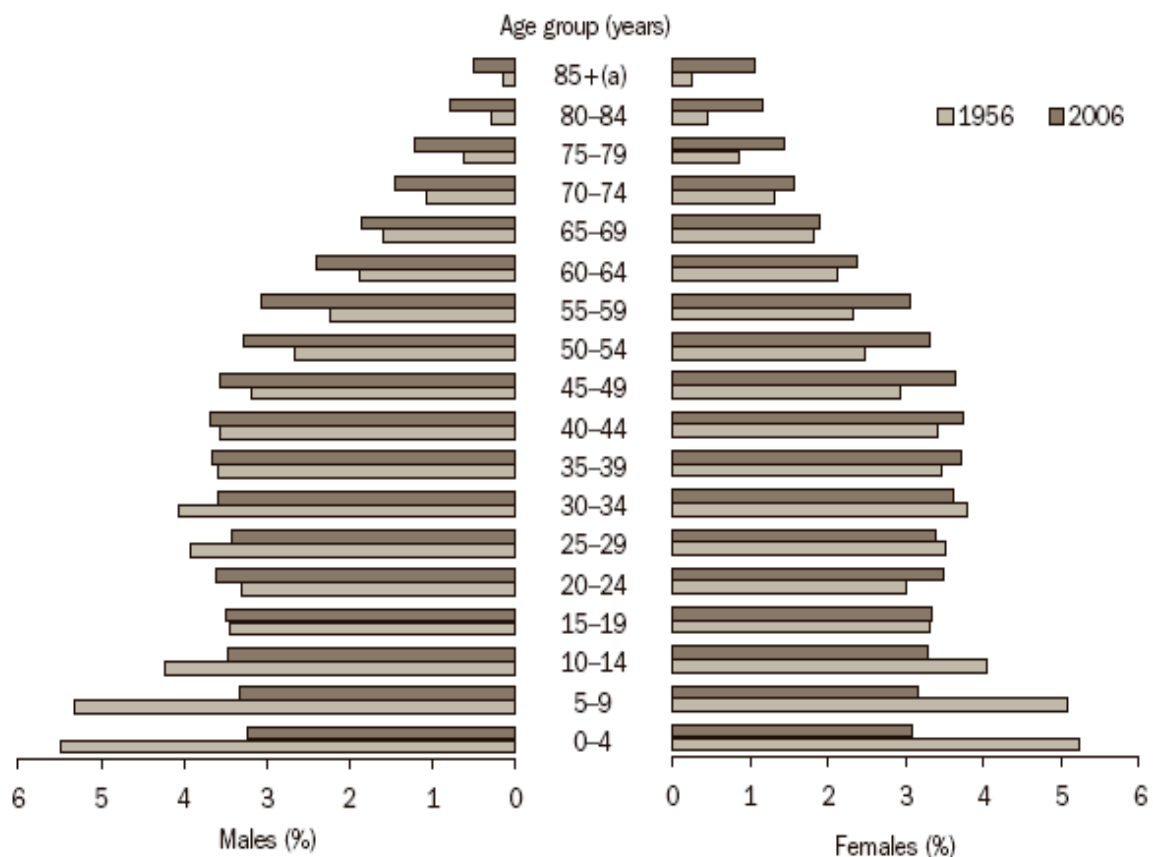


Source: Australian Historical Population Statistics (3105.0.65.001); Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories (3201.0).

The change over time in the age structure of Australia's population is also illustrated by the change in the median age. In 2006, the median age of the Australian population was 36.6 years, an increase of 5.5 years from 1986 (ABS, 2008), and it is forecast to increase over the next few decades. Weston, Qu and Soriano (2001) identified that life expectancy has increased, with the median age increasing by 12 years from 22.6 to 35.2 years in 2000; according to the ABS (2007a) the median age will increase by another 8 to 11 years by the year 2051.

Since 1995, Australia's estimated resident population aged 45 years and over has increased by 30%, which has changed the composition of the labour market. In contrast, the number of children (aged 0-14 years) has increased by only 2.3% and the number of people aged 15-44 years by only 4.8%. This uneven distribution of growth results in the gradual ageing of Australia's population, which inevitably affects labour market supply (ABS, 2007c). Figure 2 illustrates the ageing of the population by comparing age group proportions in 1956 and 2006. Australia's population is ageing because of sustained low reproductive rates, resulting in proportionally fewer children in the population and increased life expectancy; therefore, there is a higher proportion of older people in the population (ABS, 2008). Over the next 30 years, the older population will continue to change in its internal age structure. In 2006, there were 2,735,000 persons aged over 65 years, and this was predicted to increase to 3,829,000 by 2016, 5,159,000 by 2026 and up to 6,294,000 by 2036 (ABS, 2007).

**Figure 2: Age distribution of the Australian population**



(a) The 85+ age group includes all ages 85 years and over and is not directly comparable to the other five-year age groups.

Source: Australian Historical Population Statistics (3105.0.65.001); Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories (3201.0).

Figure 2 also reveals changes in gender representation. In 1956 there were 126,500 more males than females in Australia's population, while in 2006 there were 120,800 more females than males. Since 1979 Australia has been home to more females than males and in June 2006 the gender ratio of Australia's population was 98.8 males per 100 females (ABS, 2008).

It is estimated that by 2031 nearly a quarter of Australia's population will be aged over 65 years and Australia, along with other industrialised nations, will continue to face population ageing over the next half century (The Working Group of the Directorate of Social Issues, 2000; Healy 2004; ABS, 2007a). The generation born during the years 1946 to 1965, plus the high levels of post-war immigration, will ensure that by 2051 over 6.4 million people in Australia will be aged 65 years and over, compared with 2.3 million in 1999 (Healy, 2004).

The dependency ratio, representing the number of people working to the number of people not working, has become a focus of research and commentary within academia, the news media, in various practitioner journals and in the community. This ratio is important in that it compares people who are employed and not employed, and consequently either earning a wage or salary or are dependent on other income, including government pensions or allowances. The dependency ratio is also important in understanding economic trends and the requirements on governments to provide services for those on low incomes. Currently, there are five working people per person over 65 years of age not in employment; by 2041 it is projected to shrink to 2.4 working people per person over 65 (Healy, 2004). Reday-Mulvey (2005, p. 17) noted how the dependency rate directly impacts on the requirements for the provision of government services, programs and social security measures, and it is expected to increase to five people not working to ten people working by 2020, six people not working to ten people working by 2030 and seven people not working for every ten people working by 2040. The dependency ratio also has implications for the labour market, as there will be fewer people participating in employment.

The ABS (2006) found that many aspects of life today for people in their 50s are different from 20 years ago. People can now expect to live longer, with men living to a mean of 80.6 years and women to 84.6 years (an increase of 5.5 years for men and 3.9 years for women between 1980-82 and 2002-04). Men and women are far more highly educated, and more women in their 50s are in the labour force than 20 years ago (37% in 1984, increasing to 62% in 2004) (ABS, 2006). Increasing longevity and the employment of people aged 55 years and over need to be considered within

organisational workforce structures and arrangements. The demographics described here demonstrate that the Australian population and, in turn, the Australian workforce will change dramatically over the next few decades.

The representation of different age groups in Australia has been dynamic, given migration and reproductive patterns and death rates. Other changes have been social in origin, such as women in the 1950s having low levels of employment participation, which over time have increased in terms of both full- and part-time employment. Changes in family structures and access to education and social choices have also altered the demographic and gender makeup of the workforce (Abhayaratna & Lattimore, 2006).

These changes can be seen with the increase in the number of women in the workforce; increasing to 54% in the two decades from 1986 to 2006, while the participation rate for men fell from 75% to 72% (Draper, 2008). The growth of women's participation in the workforce has also corresponded to changing patterns of employment contracts and changes to the number of people working full- or part-time and in their employment status, with less permanent work and increases in fixed-term and casual employment (ABS, 2007b). The changes in employment patterns have resulted from increases in certain industry sectors such as hospitality and retail (ABS, 2007b).

Changes to age patterns in the population are also reflected in the workforce. In 1984, people aged 15-24 years comprised 23.1% of the full-time labour force; by 2004 that figure had fallen to 13.6%. Labour-market representation of women aged 40 and over has increased from 31.6% in 1984 to 46.6% in 2004. For the Government, Administration and Defence sector the average age of employees has increased by 5.7%, from 36.0 years in 1984 to 41.7 in 2004 (Kryger, 2005).

Also evidenced are changes to full- and part-time participation rates for both men and women. The proportion of people aged 45 years and over, working part-time, increased by 36% over the 20-year period to March 2008. In March 2008, 15% of men aged over 45 years were employed part-time, compared with 46% of working women in this age group (ABS, 2008b). In 2005-2006, there were 10.1 million employed people in Australia, with 71% working full-time (ABS, 2007b). However, the ABS (2008b) noted that, in general, women are more likely than men to work part-time, and those nearing retirement age are increasingly likely to work part-time. Men were more likely than women to work full-time (85% and 54% respectively). Part-time work was most prevalent among the younger (15-19 years) and older (65 years and over) age groups

(66% and 54% respectively). At least a third of women in each age group worked part-time, with the 20-24 years and 25-34 years age groups having the lowest proportion of part-time workers (38% and 34% respectively). There is an association between age and occupation, with a higher proportion of younger workers employed in lower-skilled occupations and a higher representation of older workers employed in more highly-skilled occupations (ABS, 2007b).

The ABS (2006a) reported that the proportion of employed men working full-time has decreased from 94% to 85% between 1985 and 2005, and for women from 63% to 54%. The proportion of men employed part-time more than doubled from 6% in 1985 to 15% in 2005, and the proportion of women increased from 37% to 46% (ABS, 2006a). The increases in part-time employment result from changing industry requirements, advancements in technology and personal choice decisions (Kryger, 2005; Sayers, 2006).

With the changing workforce demographics and changing work arrangements (full and part time; permanent, fixed term and casual) it can be questioned whether the current workforce management structures are able to adjust to these changes and whether they are sustainable for organisations to maintain workforce capability. There is a clear need to consider how HR practices have altered or will need to change in light of changing labour market characteristics.

Given that fewer young people are entering into the labour market and with predictions of a further decline in the level of workforce representation, what will happen to the demographic patterns and participation levels in the labour market? It is predicted that Tasmania, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory will bear a bigger impact of reduced labour pools than other states and territories (ABS, 2007). A labour market contraction could significantly hinder productivity and economic growth, which could be averted if productivity rises or new sources of labour are found (Workplace Express, 2005).

Over the last decade the labour force participation rate for people aged 65 and over has risen (up by 2.7 percentage points to 8.2% in October 2006) but remains considerably lower than the participation rate for people aged 45-64 (ABS, 2007a). Over the same period however, there has also been an increase in the labour force participation of people aged 45-65 years of 6.2 percentage points to 71.6%, largely because of a substantial rise in the participation rate of mature-aged women (ABS, 2007a).

The Demographic Change Advisory Council [DCAC] (2008) noted that as the workforce ages and the number of people entering the workforce begins to decline, the capacity to maintain the supply of labour will be critical to economic wellbeing. One of the most important areas impacting on supply capacity is the health of the working age population, as it is an important determinant of labour participation and productivity, and contributes to the ability of organisations to maintain workforce capability and capacity (Allan, 2008). By 2020, one in every four Australians will be over 65 years of age and it is predicted that there will be a skills shortage because of a labour shortage of more than 1.4 million workers (Faoro, 2008). Faoro (2008) bases this on the expected large size of the age group approaching the minimum retirement age and also the decline in the number of young people entering the labour market. Between 2002 and 2012, Australia will be reliant on the 45-plus age group for 85% growth in the workforce; by 2013 there will be a shortfall of more than 2,000,000 employees, even with women's participation in the workforce continuing to climb to make up more than 45% of the Australian workforce (Faoro, 2008). This indicates continuing changes in the labour market, including the levels and types of workforce participation into the future, and provides evidence of the challenges for workforces to recruit effectively in an ever tightening labour market.

Compounding this picture, overall workforce participation rates are projected to fall, from around 63.5% in 2003/04 to 56.3% by 2044/45, which will occur at the same time as growth in the traditional working age population (15 to 64 years) is expected to slow to almost zero (Louw & Beyer, 2007). Technology has also played a role in changing demand for occupational skills and knowledge, and occupational and skill shortages across a range of industries have been evident over the past 10 years (Louw & Beyer, 2007, p. 527). Therefore, ageing patterns, workforce participation, changing industries and technologies will contribute to changing labour force supply and demand.

Given the identified age projections, labour market participation changes and skills shortages, the labour market has become highly competitive for employers to attract, engage and retain the right people with the right skills, and at the right time (CIPD, 2005; Faoro, 2008; Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Ogle, 2009). The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations [DEWR] (2005) noted that as labour shortages increase, employers will need to be innovative to attract the shrinking supply of available talent. The workforce of the future will be more diverse: it will consist of more older workers, more parents, more people with disabilities and more people wanting to work part-time, so well-considered and managed strategies will be needed. Leibold and Voelpel (2006, p. 25) wrote that:

... the challenges of a shrinking and ageing workforce are critical, because organisations are not geared to handle the convergence of several major factors that are simultaneously impacting on business in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Leibold and Voelpel (2006) hold that the ageing population patterns, global markets and technology have all contributed to the current challenges faced by organisations. To this extent, organisations face competition for talent and skills. It is the intersection of these factors that has sparked unprecedented levels of interest in the labour market, ageing and changing workforce drivers and conditions (Leibold & Voelpel, 2006; Abhayaratna & Lattimore, 2006; Faoro, 2008; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). According to Leibold and Voelpel (2006), compounding the crisis is the fact that non-adaptive managerial mindsets and attitudes may hinder organisations in addressing workforce challenges in order to sustain workforce capability and productivity.

It has already been noted that there have been increases and decreases in different industry sectors; so too has the labour market attracted to these industries varied. Work and residential location also factor into the supply and demand of workforce participation. This has implications for labour markets' ability to meet workforce demands within geographic areas. Changing work and residential locations, entry and re-entry into the labour market, retirement patterns and post-retirement employment are not overtly identified in labour market statistics and are difficult to map over time. Given the demographic changes, HR managers can no longer rely on a ready pool of appropriately trained and experienced employees. Therefore, there is a need to research how organisations can structure their workforces with appropriate HR practices and policies in order to attract, engage and retain their employees.

### **3.2.1 Tasmania—population and workforce demographics**

Understanding population demographics at a state level is important, especially in the case of Tasmania, given its geographic isolation, different labour market and population composition. DCAC (2007) noted that Tasmania's population is expected to age more rapidly than Australia's as a whole, and will encounter many demographic changes before other states and territories. Over the next 20 years the proportion of Tasmanians under the age of 15 is projected to decline by approximately 14%, while the proportion of people aged 65 years and over could grow by almost 80% (DCAC, 2007). The forecast for a continued decrease in the Tasmanian population is not only ascribed to births and deaths, but also to the migration of young people to other states, which is not predicted to decrease dramatically in coming decades (DCAC, 2007, p. 2). Such an expected decline in the number of young people entering the labour market



and participating in employment could result in difficulties for private and public sector organisations in being able to sustain workforce capability.

The ABS (2007a) estimated that the number of people aged 65 years and over in Tasmania will increase from 68,900 at June 2004 to between 121,600 and 196,600 by 2051. By then, people aged 65 years and over will account for around one-third (31% to 36%) of the population, compared to 14% in 2004. The number of people aged 85 years and over will also increase substantially from 2% in 2004 to 7-10% by 2051 (ABS, 2007a, p. 72). Tasmania has an older median age population, which may have additional implications for workforce participation in Tasmania and in meeting the labour market requirements for private and public service organisations (ABS 2006b, 2007a, 2008).

Since 2001, Tasmania's population has increased by 3.4%, compared to a 5.8% increase across Australia (ABS, 2006b, 2008,) and now has a median age of 39 years compared to 37 years for the whole of Australia. In Tasmania, 16% of the population is aged 65 years and over (ABS 2006b, p. 2). The ABS (2006b) also found that 27.2% of the Tasmanian population were aged 55 years or over in 2006, and 65.4% were in the 15 to 64 year age groups and represented the majority of the labour force. It would be expected, then, that current employees over the age of 55 years may continue in employment, but factors such as retirement potential, health status and other events could change this representation.

DCAC (2007) noted that Tasmania's working population is likely to peak at around 322,000 in the next three years and then start to decline by around 20% over the next 40 years. The effect, according to DCAC (2007), is that there will be fewer people available to work. Currently there are about two people working for every one person outside the working age range; by 2046, this ratio could decline to one working age person for every person not of working age. This is a higher rate of dependency in Tasmania than that predicted for Australia (as detailed earlier in this chapter) and has significant implications regarding labour market and workforce capability in Tasmania. The ability to attract young people into the labour market will also be a challenge in Tasmania. By 2015 in Tasmania there will be eight young people (15-24 years) approaching labour market entry for every ten people leaving, and by 2023 seven people approaching for every ten people leaving (Jackson & Thompson, 2002).

There is a considerable level of current research activity, debate and comment on the capability of organisations to balance the needs of the workforce and sustain productivity across both the private and public spheres (Healy, 2004; Drabsch, 2004;

Jorgenson, 2005; DCAC, 2008). Ageing populations, ageing workforces and different generations in the workforce will effect significant changes to the composition and agility of the workforce in the coming years. Therefore, organisational HR practices and policies need to be informed by systematic evidence as to the effectiveness of their attraction, engagement and retention measures if they are to remain viable.

### **3.3 Age, work and retirement**

Given the significant ageing of the population and workforce, it is valuable to examine older employees and their work intentions. This section will consider the individual and organisational pressures affecting individuals' decisions to remain in the workforce beyond the traditional retirement age, and what work structures organisations should consider in terms of attraction, engagement and retention.

Before embarking on a discussion regarding age, potential, reasons and expectations for retirement, it is useful to first consider a definition of retirement. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 'retirement' generally meant a sudden and complete withdrawal from paid employment (usually full-time) (ABS, 2007c). Retirement from the paid workforce was taken to be a rite of passage or tradition whereby a person would reach a certain age (and so be able to access superannuation or apply for an aged pension) and, with that, withdrew from the workforce (ABS, 2007c).

Andrews (2002) wrote in the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia that the baby-boomer generation (people born between 1945 and 1961) will enter older age with different aspirations and expectations than their forebears, and it is likely to demand a greater range and higher quality of services and to experiment with ways of experiencing older age. The increasing resources, expectations and needs of future generations of older people will have implications for organisations. Therefore, this implies that older people may participate differently in the labour market and also that this may drive changes to how organisations design and deliver their services.

Although retirement may still mean a departure from the workforce for some people, others now phase in their retirement by reducing their hours of employment gradually or withdrawing from and/or re-entering the workforce intermittently over a period leading up to full retirement (Shacklock, 2005, 2009; ABS, 2007c). The idea of 'retirement' has come to have different connotations for different people. Some workers, having fully retired, reverse the process and re-enter the workforce (ABS, 2007c). Another noticeable change is in the pattern and the age of retirement. The age

at which people retire and the age they expect or intend to retire, or even plan to retire, vary for a number of different reasons that will be examined below.

The average retirement age for recent retirees over 45 years of age was 60 years, with women retiring approximately three years earlier than men (the average retirement age for men was 61.5 years) (ABS, 2007c). Many studies concerning retirement have looked at people's retirement ages. The ABS (2008b) noted that in 2006-07, Australians who had retired in the past 10 years had, on average, left work at 58 years of age; those who retired in the past 5 years had, on average, left at 60 years and those intending to retire planned, on average, to retire at 63 years. Changing patterns of work, labour markets, changing social patterns, individual preferences and health factors all contribute to actual retirement age and intended retirement age decisions (Shacklock, 2005, 2009; Jackson et al, 2006; Warren, 2008).

CCH Australia (2006) found that of three million retirees, 63% had worked in the last 20 years; 34% had retired or ceased their last job when reaching the minimum retirement age; 26% retired because of sickness, injury or ill health and 11% were retrenched or dismissed by their employers. Similar results were found in research undertaken by the ABS (2007c). For people considering retirement, the most common factors influencing their decision about when they would retire were personal health or physical abilities (40%), financial security (36%) and reaching the eligible age for an age pension (15%) (ABS, 2007c, 2008b). Not captured in these reports are other reasons for retiring (or leaving employment), including caring for a partner, family members or children, or people wanting to pursue study, volunteer or community activities, self-employment or investment opportunities.

Do factors such as educational attainment, job or occupational group, job satisfaction, marital status and having dependents influence a person's decision to retire? Cobb-Clark and Stillman (2006, pp. 8-12) researched this and considered a number of factors including education, background, health status, children, marital status and employment status (employed or self-employed). They found a range of different factors such as health, marital or financial status contributed to middle-aged people's retirement decisions. Similar results were reported by Shacklock, (2005), Jackson et al (2006), Warren (2008) and AHRI (2009). Rolland (2007) identified in her research about ageing workers and retirement that of those intending to work after retirement, at least 60% planned to continue to work on a part-time or casual basis.

Perry (2001) studied men and women who had left jobs less than five years ago, and found that almost half of the men and one-third of women aged 50 to 54 who left jobs

did so for organisational rather than individual reasons, because of restructuring and resulting redundancy. Table 2 below highlights the greater proportion of women aged between 45 and 70 years who left positions for family or caring reasons compared to men. Similar results are noted for both men and women leaving because of ill health or disability, to retire or to change jobs. Not noted here are the reasons for changing jobs, for example, career advancement, seeking better terms and conditions, more flexible hours or for better pay.

**Table 2: Men and women who left a job less than 5 years ago—reason by age (%)—Australia**

Men	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	Total
Retrenched/redundant	23.7	28.3	25.9	26.9	6.5	23.4
Job loser – other	24.7	28.9	16.5	17.9	17.4	21.3
Left to change jobs	26.3	21.7	12.7	3.0	1.1	14.9
Ill-health/disability	10.5	10.5	19.6	27.6	17.4	16.4
Family/caring reasons	2.1	2.6	1.3	6.0	3.3	2.9
To retire	0.0	0.0	15.8	23.1	53.3	14.5
Other job leavers	20.5	27.6	17.7	11.2	16.3	19.4
Number	190	152	158	134	92	726
Women	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	Total
Retrenched/redundant	8.5	11.0	12.8	9.2	9.8	10.1
Job loser – other	21.8	21.2	21.1	20.7	19.6	20.8
Left to change jobs	33.0	27.4	10.2	4.6	2.0	20.3
Ill-health/disability	9.0	16.4	24.8	18.4	15.7	16.0
Family/caring reasons	10.1	13.0	11.0	18.4	11.8	12.4
To retire	2.7	2.1	9.2	33.3	49.0	12.5
Other job leavers	33.5	25.3	20.2	14.9	19.6	24.9
Total	188	146	109	87	51	582

Source: Perry (2001, pp. 37-38)

The table above detailed the reasons for separation. However, Shacklock (2009, pp. 80-81) noted that few studies have directly sought information from older workers themselves as to their working intentions and what might influence them to remain in employment. She identified that what has been largely overlooked is an investigation of whether the perceptions of work-related variables influence older workers' intentions to continue working. This then, identifies a need to understand what work means to people aged over 45 years and what factors will influence their ongoing employment.

Gaining a better understanding of the variables and reasons people have for staying at or leaving work is warranted and may contribute to how workforces should be arranged

and what types of provisions are needed to keep older employees working. It may be that while women return to the workforce enthusiastically after family commitments have been fulfilled, men, on the other hand, contemplate the prospect of retirement, or at least, reducing their work commitments, in favour of a different work-life balances (Shacklock, 2009, p. 81). This, then, provides a challenge to how organisations should structure their workforces to accommodate women returning to the workforce or men reducing their working hours, as noted above.

Shacklock's (2009, p. 81) research identified a number of work-related variables that might encourage older workers to remain in the Australian workforce: attachment to (passion for) work; importance to the individual of working; perception of personal autonomy at work; flexible work arrangements; interpersonal contacts at work; interests outside of work; and management and organisational variables, such as supervision, bureaucracy and work environment.

These variables may apply to any age group but may differ in how they are perceived by and provided for, by workplaces and individuals. Shacklock (2009) found that attachment to work is typically related to the content of the work or job itself, and that positive views about work were found to influence well-being and identity, encouraging older people to consider extending their working lives.

The research of Smyer and Pitt-Catsouphe (2007) found similar factors to Shacklock, (2005), Jackson et al (2006), Rolland (2007), Warren (2008) and AHRI (2009) in that there are a number of personal factors—financial resources, physical and mental health concerns, job satisfaction, and family issues—affecting older workers' decisions about employment. These factors influence people's feelings about their meanings of work and will either pull them towards the labour force or push them into retirement. Shacklock's (2005) research found that the majority of the older workers did not want to continue working beyond the traditional retirement age of 65 years but wanted to spend more time with their partners, to become involved in interests outside of work, and to remove themselves from (perceived) negative circumstances in the organisation.

The literature demonstrates that employees retire for a variety of different reasons. Organisations wishing to retain older employees therefore need to take account of those reasons when designing their HR policies and practices. This is essential for workforce sustainability given that, according to Shacklock (2005, 2009); organisational policies were found to be of little support to encourage employees to continue working beyond the traditional age of retirement. HR practices and policies need to consider the complexity of the reasons and drivers that individuals consider when determining

whether to retire from or stay in paid employment. This complexity is further examined in the following section as it details how people's plans for retirement are not always definite and how they may view retirement as involving paid work.

### **3.3.1 Retirement planning, intention and change**

Research has focussed on several factors that inform retirement intention, the first being age. Connors (2007, p. 10) found that 27% of participants plan to keep working into their 70s and 12% expected to work 'until they drop'. The 2007 Year Book (ABS, 2007a) found that of 3.4 million people, almost half (47%) did not know at what age they would retire. Of those who had indicated an age, 2.3% intended to retire under 55 years; 19% intended to retire aged 55-69 years; 31% intended to retire aged 60-64 years; 39% intended to retire aged 65-69 years; and 8.4% intended to retire at 70 years of age or over. If almost half of these employees are unsure of their intended retirement age and 52.3% of those who indicated a retirement age would retire by the age of 65, then organisations may find future planning difficult to achieve workforce sustainability.

Research by the Office of Public Employment indicated that the approximate age at which employees expected to leave the Victorian Public Service was between 62 and 64 years of age (Office of Public Employment, 2004). The factors that influence their decision to retire were similar to those already noted. However, they may not be the same factors influencing employees' decisions to leave. The Office of Public Employment (2004) found that public service employees, in deciding whether or not to leave, would be influenced in their decision if they felt that: they were not contributing to the organisation; feeling pressure at work to consider retirement; had difficult working relationships in the work unit; or lacked recognition for their contribution to the workplace. The reasons noted here all relate to the workplace, and do not provide an understanding of other individual factors, including financial security, health or caring responsibilities. However, the reasons do indicate that the factors influencing decisions to leave are based on workplace matters.

Cobb-Clark and Stillman (2006) found that approximately two-thirds of men and more than half of women appear to be making standard retirement plans. However, this research does not detail what a 'standard' retirement plan is; whether this involves self-funded retirement or includes factors such as anticipated participation in voluntary work, continued employment in another capacity or current or expected health problems. Cobb-Clark and Stillman (2006, p. 10) found that one in five participants were able to give an age at which they expected to retire from the labour force;

however, one in ten either did not know when they expected to retire or did not expect to retire at all.

There is evidence that formulating expectations about the age at which one will retire appears to be easier for employees in jobs with well-defined pension benefits (Cobb-Clark & Stillman, 2006). Moreover, those who report that they do not know when they expect to retire do, in fact, seem to face greater uncertainty in their retirement planning. Those who anticipate working forever appear to do so out of concerns about the adequacy of retirement incomes rather than from increased job satisfaction or a heightened desire to remain employed (Cobb-Clark and Stillman, 2006). Men alter their retirement plans in response to labour market shocks, while women are more sensitive to their own and their partners' health changes (Cobb-Clark & Stillman, 2006; and Warren, 2008). This is supported by the Jackson et al (2006) and ABS (2007b) who claims that many external factors serve to disrupt retirement intentions: the dates when people intend to retire are often delayed by one to three years and their actual and planned retirement date could differ by two to six years.

If there is uncertainty for employees in making firm retirement decisions, then it may be worthwhile to also consider the reasons why they would choose to stay on at work. There are a number of factors that influence people's decision to remain in the workforce, including: that they feel that they are contributing to the organisation; that there is supportive management; they have positive working relationships; they feel that their work is valued and important; and that there is recognition for their contribution to the workplace (Office of Public Employment, 2004; DEWR, 2005). Jackson et al (2006) examined the ABS (2006) Survey of Retirement Intentions and found that over 200,000 people who had previously retired had either returned to work or were looking for work, of which 46% claimed was because of financial need and 35% because of boredom and the need for something to do. In light of this, Jackson et al (2006, p. 320) commented on the International Retirement Security Survey (AARP 2005) in which only four in ten (37%) respondents rated the need for money as the primary motivating factor for continued participation in the workforce. The main reasons were a need to stay connected (45%) and enjoyment of work (43%). This indicates that the majority of respondents sought work for the enjoyment or to feel a part of a workplace.

Expectations and the meaning of retirement have changed. Post-retirement life and pressures from financial, personal and work-related sources may alter retirement plans. For organisations, this too has implications, both in encouraging older workers to

remain in the workplace whilst still allowing for health or caring issues, and in providing a workplace that caters for its employees' needs and is still able to sustain required levels of productivity.

### **3.3.2 Mature-aged workers — flexibility and work**

With increasing numbers of mature-aged people in employment, the question arises as to the type of arrangements and flexibility required and available to retain employees up to their retirement. Given the increasing number of women in the workforce, it is also appropriate to consider if gender makes a difference in retirement and employment decisions. Loretto, Vickerstaff and White (2005, p. iv) found that older women comprise around 72% of all part-time workers, but the number of older men working part time has also increased over the last decade. The majority of older workers working part time indicated that they choose to work part time; however, nearly twice as many men (35%) as women (18%) said that they worked part time because they are financially secure (and could therefore choose to work less hours) (Loretto, Vickerstaff & White, 2005).

Whilst older workers would welcome more choice about their working patterns prior to retirement, research suggests that people would prefer to stay with their existing employers, but be able to downscale their commitment in terms of hours or working patterns (Loretto, Vickerstaff & White, 2005, p. iv). Knowing whether this preference also relates to individuals' job security, work-life balance, job satisfaction and commitment would further assist in understanding the needs of older employees. The typology of older workers needs to recognise that the older population is diverse, with different needs and motivations, and that the major constraint on extending flexible work options for older workers is the demand-side problem of whether employers are able and/or willing to provide flexible work (Loretto, Vickerstaff & White, 2005, p. 75). Older employees being able to access flexible work arrangements may be a key engagement and retention factor, especially in the period leading up to their retirement decisions.

The question of age being a barrier to continuing employment or re-entering the labour market is important, given the declining patterns of labour market participation as well as current and projected occupational and skills shortages. Ranzijn (2005, pp. 6-7) stated that the central issue is not that the mean age of workers is increasing, but that the relative size of the workforce is reducing and that workforce ageing is about productivity, not age. The decreasing numbers of people in the labour market has made the recruitment market highly competitive and has required organisations to



consider a range of retention policies and practices in order to sustain workplace productivity and growth.

The reasons for retiring or remaining in the workforce are a complex matter for both individuals and organisations. The pathway to retirement today involves a more flexible approach and, as Rolland (2007a) noted from her retirement survey, over 65% of respondents were interested in flexible pathways to retirement and of those, over 60% would like to take a flexible option in working in the same job for fewer hours. Reducing work hours appears to have occurred in line with decreasing labour market participation and skills shortages (Warren, 2008, p. 2):

Today pathways to retirement are believed to be much more diverse, with many more people expected to make a gradual transition into retirement, though transition or bridging jobs that may involve a reduction in hours, a decline in responsibilities or a move to self-employment or casual work.

The research literature highlights a number of changes in peoples' expectations of their later working life and retirement, but the need remains to systematically determine what types of HR practices, policies and management styles will keep older workers engaged in work that they finding satisfying.

### **3.4 Employment and generations**

In considering workforce sustainability the themes of attraction, engagement and retention—should organisations provide different practices and policies in order to attract and retain the different generational groups? Much discussion and analysis has recently focussed on generational differences in the workplace.

Ringer and Garma (2007, p. 1067) assert that age, life experience and commitment may affect different generations' predispositions and that there is no general consensus within the academic and popular literature regarding the age span of the different generations. DCAC (2007) stated that a generation is broadly defined within a 15 to 20 year range and because of the different economic and social environment; they share broad characteristics that are attributed to each generation. This has led to using generational labels, which group like attributes to different age groups (DCAC, 2007, p. 5).

A generational cohort has been defined as 'the aggregation of individuals who experience the same event within the same time interval', and is the notion of a group of people bound together by sharing the experience of events common to them because of their dates of birth (Duxbury & Higgins, 2008, p. 34). This infers that people

of the same generation will have experiences similar to each other because of a number of technological, societal and cultural factors. These experiences shape their expectations regarding their work, personal and social spheres, and Arsenault (2004, p. 132) found that each generation has created its own culture, traditions, and mentors through its attitudes, preferences and dispositions.

There appears to be different age groupings for the labels given to the different generations by researchers, in media articles and practitioner journal articles. Henry (2004) provided the following generational cohorts birth date ranges: Veterans 1929-1949; Baby Boomers 1950-1964; Generation X 1965-1979 and Generation Y 1980-current. Other writers, including Leibold and Voelpel (2006), use different age groupings: Baby Boomers 1941-1961; Generation X 1962-1980; Generation Y 1981-2001; and Millennials 2001-2021.

Kramar (2004) researched contemporary retention strategies, finding that measures to retain talent have focused on younger employees (Generations X and Y), who seek employment that provides or addresses the need for: work to be meaningful and challenging; the ability to express their individuality in their work and make a difference; opportunities to learn, whether through mentoring, job rotation or interesting workplace assignments; an egalitarian workplace and a relaxed working environment; taking responsibility for their own careers; flexible working arrangements available to accommodate the other demands of their lives; and feedback, preferably informal and supportive, about how they are performing to allow them to keep growing.

Packer (2008) reported on a survey that indicated that almost half of HR practitioners believe that in their workplaces there is intergenerational conflict that impacts on performance. Further, about half the respondents (from all generational groups) were reluctant to express preferences based on age for who they like to work with, manage or have manage them (Packer, 2008). However, Packer (2008) did not elaborate on the reasons for the reluctance to indicate a preference; therefore it could be viewed that the reluctance to comment may be based on a perception of bias or that age wasn't a factor important to their working preferences.

Many HR managers believed that: conflicts between the generations affect workplace performance; that organisations should have strategies in place to manage generational differences; and that the affixing of labels to different age groups with common expectations has gained acceptance (AHRI, 2008). Yet Kramar (2006, p. 13) noted that a framework for understanding the attitudes and motivations of different generations is the 'generational model', which has been developed on the assumption

that the environment shapes generational identity and defines different life stages. For Kramar (2006), organisations should gain an understanding of the differences and tailor their workforce management to meet their preferences and expectations of employees, but not in a limited one-size-fits-all manner.

Research about generational differences has resulted in mixed findings. Donaldson (2007) wrote that the current questions being raised about generational differences are not new. According to Hayes (2008, pp. 202-205), reviewing Deal's book about addressing generational gaps, Deal (2007) found that one of the major points of her research were that people want the same things, no matter what generation they are from, that an individual can effectively work with (or manage) people from all generations and that 'all generations have similar values: they just express them 'differently''. This aligns with Kramar's (2006) view that understanding differences between employees is important and a broad-brush approach will not be sufficient, given individuals' different preferences and expectations.

Jurkiewicz (1997) identified that regardless of generational affiliation, employees tend to share the same concerns and needs as they progress from graduation to family, from growing family to empty nesters and from empty nesters to retirement. Jurkiewicz's (1997) point is that people progress through different life stages and will therefore share similar concerns, though they experience them at different times. However, as noted by Deal (2007), the difference is that employees and managers express their views and expectations differently. Kirkpatrick, Martin and Warneke (2008, p. 1) support this and noted that as there are now four generations (in the workplace), each generation brings different influences and expectations to work, and understanding the areas of common ground will allow employers to develop high-performance workplace strategies. According to Kirkpatrick, Martin and Warneke (2008, p. 8):

Meaningful work is important to all generations, and they value the opportunity to contribute to their organisations when something of value is happening.

Contrary to the literature and stereotypes about generational differences, Jurkiewicz (2000) found a homogenous pattern of what employees want across all age cohorts in the public sector. Further, the desire to work hard and do a good job is a value that employees bring to the job, not something created on the job, though organisational circumstances can enhance or repress the expression of employees' desire to work: the work ethic is resultant from our cultural heritage, upbringing and value systems.

Therefore, there is a need to investigate whether the expectations of employees vary because of age, and additional research is warranted to identify whether there are

differences and similarities between the different age groups and between employees and managers. This is necessary in order to assess organisational policies and practices and whether there is an alignment between employees' and managers, and how organisational policies meet their expectations.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed evidence regarding population ageing, changing patterns of youth employment and declining reproductive rates, along with retirement trends that will impact on future workforce participation. Employment status, workforce composition and participation levels all contribute to the rise in concern about maintaining Australia's and Tasmania's ability to ensure a capable and productive workforce for the future. As well, the chapter highlighted the need for HR policies and practices to consider and address the age factors in order to achieve a productive and engaged workforce.

For individuals, retirement has changed and may involve a different pattern in which working involves flexibility to meet individual needs and where organisations can adapt to providing different working arrangements. This chapter examined the different decisions made by people approaching retirement and how the meaning of retirement has changed. The chapter also considered the topic of generational differences in the workplace and whether there was consensus that changes to workforce conditions and working patterns appear to be necessary to meet each generation's needs and requirements.

The demographic change to the Australian population and workforce composition noted above requires organisations to consider how to remain competitive in the labour market and how to engage and retain motivated employees. The significant impact of having a substantial number of older employees leaving the workforce will impact on an organisation being able to retain this group by providing difference employment arrangements.

As noted in this chapter, traditional retirement patterns appear to be changing for a number of reasons. Organisations need to better understand what factors may influence employees' decisions about remaining in the workforce or when and under what arrangements they will retire. In order for organisations to have effective HR policies and practices that address this and provide for post-retirement work arrangements further research is warranted to ascertain what employees' perceive as being important in remaining at work.

The next chapter will explore the concept of workplace flexibility and how flexible work can address the needs and requirements of individuals and organisations.



## **Chapter 4     Work, balance and flexibility**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter details key factors found across many industries and organisations in respect of the increasing need to attain diversity and increase work-life balance through HR policies and practices. Changes to employment patterns and workforce participation have occurred alongside emerging management styles and workplace structures. Given demographic and labour market changes, technological advances, skills shortages and changing social expectations, the contemporary workplace has also had to address the problem of balancing work and life factors. As Bardoel, De Cieri and Santos (2008) noted, practitioner and academic interest in work-life issues has developed in response to substantial demographic and technological shifts such as the increased participation of women in the workforce, changes in family structures and the increase of flexible work options.

### **4.2 Diversity**

The concept of diversity has recently gained attention, following measures aimed at remedying past discrimination across all areas of society, including employment. Following World War II significant changes occurred to the composition of the workforce (Pocock, 2005; Warren, 2008). Management practices then encompassed the notion of a multicultural workforce, following the theory that for an organisation to serve a diverse population its workforce should be representative of that population, and diversity in the workforce would assist in innovation and promote more cohesion across workplaces (Cox, 1993; Diversity Factory, 2006; Murray & Syed, 2005; Bourke, 2007; Equal Employment Opportunity Network of Australia, 2008).

Diversity, then, provided a means or a framework by which to consider flexibility within workforce policies and practices to meet the needs of various employee groups. Literature uses the term 'diversity' broadly to cover a wide range of workplace arrangements to meet employee needs and to achieve better outcomes for organisations in terms of workforce capacity and productivity (Cox, 1993; Diversity Factory, 2006; Bourke, 2007; Bourke & Russell, 2009).

The management of diversity is built on a set of values, and recognises that the differences between people offer a potential strength for an organisation (Cox, 1993; De Cieri & Kramar, 2003; Bourke, 2007). Fundamental to this approach is an acknowledgement that a variety of individual characteristics could influence people's experience at work and shape their perceptions. Organisations have been required

through EEO legislation to adapt their workforce policies to provide for diversity and this is also an acknowledgement of how diversity in the workforce has benefits for individuals and the organisation (De Cieri & Kramar, 2003; Bourke, 2007). Changing workforce policies and practices to address the diversity needs of the workforce has also resulted in flexibility in workforce arrangements and consequent organisational gains. It has been an adaptive process for many organisations and whilst this originated from EEO legislation, it has provided a level of flexibility that has resulted in productivity gains for organisations.

### **4.3 Work-life balance and flexible work**

The concept of work-life balance has evolved over the past few decades (SSA-Vic, 2005). As with diversity, work-life balance has different definitions. Diversity measures have required flexibility in work arrangements, and this focus has also led to the concept of work-life balance. Work-life balance is dynamic, and its meaning and application continue to alter and adapt to a wide range of circumstances and to the differing needs of employees. Houston (2005, pp. 2-3) wrote that the current promotion of work-life balance reflects changes in the economic, political and social climate, with the tensions between the individual's desire for work-life balance and employers' need for greater flexibility reflected in employee attitudes and work behaviours. This is similarly noted by Major and Germano (2006), Duxbury and Higgins (2008), and Kalliath and Brough (2008). Employees increasingly want the right to quality work as well as time for individual pursuits such as contributing to the community, participating in leisure activities, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, studying and being active family members (SSA-Vic, 2005; Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008). This means that employers need to compete for skilled, productive and committed employees, and to do this they need to offer various ways for employees to balance work-life commitments.

Competitive pressures have also increased the need for employers to foster more innovative, collaborative and productive workplaces, and SSA-Vic (2005, p. 13) identified that in order to compete effectively, businesses increasingly need to ensure higher levels of productivity and progressively flexible workforces that can respond quickly to changing organisational demands.

#### **4.3.1 Work-life balance—dimensions and implications**

Defining work-life balance is difficult, as it relates to each individual's perception of what it is, what it means and how is it articulated, implemented and managed. This also



applies to the employer's perspective. Industrial Relations Victoria (2007) and Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 325) stated that work-life balance is about people having a measure of control over when, where and how they work.

Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 326) defined work-life balance as:

... the individual's perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities.

This identifies the individual's need for a balance between work and personal life, but the ability to have work compatible with current life priorities may appear unattainable. This ability would depend on a number of factors, including the type of work, qualifications, experience and suitable vacancies in the right location (Burke, 2006).

The Office of Public Employment (2004), Parkes and Langford (2008), Pocock (2005) and SSA-Vic (2005) support a working definition that:

... work-life balance is a lifestyle that allows one to successfully achieve what he or she wants in the areas of work, friendships, family and community and social activities, with no activity being to the detriment of another.

Work-life balance is drawn from multiple life roles, is highly personal and means different things to different people; it is not a static concept, as people's needs vary depending on individual requirements and over time (Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 324). If needs vary across individuals and possibly over time, then how should or could an organisation address this within their workforce management practices and policies?

With the growing awareness of the current skills shortage and 'the war for talent', a subtle shift has occurred in the arguments for work-life balance, from responding to individual employee needs to a broader-based business case (Parkes & Langford, 2008, p. 268). Placing work-life balance needs within the work context has led to gains in retention, motivation and commitment from employees and thus increased productivity and diversity (Parkes & Langford, 2008). Therefore, in the workplace setting, work-life strategies, policies, programs and practices aim to address flexibility, quality of work and life and work-life balance (Toten, 2006; Bardoel, De Cieri, & Mayson, 2008). Toten (2006, pp. 507-514) identified that work-life balance strategies include study leave and assistance, part-time work, paid parental leave, flexible working hours, job-sharing, work arrangements or purchased leave, rostered days off, working from home or telecommuting, career breaks, compressed working weeks and casual work.

Work-life conflict is a concept that describes the difficulty between people's work and home lives as inharmonious and detrimental to the individual, both at home and work (Pocock, 2004; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008). Duxbury and Higgins (2008, p. 8) noted that the amount of work-life conflict a worker experiences depends on the type of conflict being considered; the person's gender, the type of dependent care responsibilities and the position within the organisation. Employees' position or status in the workplace is noted as a source of conflict, but its impact on people will vary with their experiences and roles at work and outside of work. The proportion of employees experiencing these specific forms of work-life conflict will increase in the next several years as the number of employees with elder-care responsibility increases. Duxbury and Higgins (2008, p. 1) identified two of the groups that may be at risk of experiencing higher levels of work-life conflict (or overload) as being women in the 'sandwich generation' who have both childcare and elder-care responsibilities and women with dependent care responsibilities. These areas of potential conflict relate to demands placed on individuals because of caring responsibilities, and workplace stressors may also contribute to work-life conflict. Therefore, organisations need to understand how an individual may be affected by such conflicts and how their workforce policies and practices could be used to assist employees in meeting personal needs whilst still participating actively in the workplace.

Organisations need to understand the importance of employees who have caring responsibilities. The nature of carer responsibilities is likely to change with population ageing, and it is anticipated that many members of the workforce will need to assume responsibility for caring for their aged parents. Rather than exiting the workforce, people will seek working arrangements that facilitate managing both work and carer roles (Kramar, 2006, p. 13). Therefore, the suite of workforce practices and provisions that assist employees in this regard needs to be carefully considered in providing appropriate assistance to the individual, without resulting in increased pressure on co-workers. Not all employees will require leave or work arrangements for caring purposes but this type of leave arranged and managed in the workplace requires careful consideration on the organisation's part, extending to the management practices used. Without effective management, the policies that support employees with caring responsibilities will not be effective for either individuals or the organisation.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW] (2007, p. 15), caring undertaken by older people is significant. Nearly 600,000 Australians provide care for older relatives or friends, and family members provide over 80% of the help given to people over 60 years of age (Managing Work-Life Balance, 2003). Martin (2006)

reported on an ABS study that found that nearly 50% of adults provided care for other children or adults, up from 42% in 2000. Forty-eight per cent of carers were employed; of these, 60% had used one or more work arrangements in order to fulfil their carer responsibilities. Women were more likely to provide care, and the most common work arrangements were paid leave and flexible working hours (Martin, 2006).

Furthermore, the care of elderly relatives often arises unexpectedly and is one of the main reasons for employees taking time off work (Shoptaugh, Phelps & Visio, 2004). The Taskforce on Care Costs (2007, p. 5) found that one in three Australians surveyed expect to care for an aged person and/or a person with a disability in the next five years. The ability to take leave or change working arrangements to care for an older person is not standard across all workforces, awards and industries. The Council on the Ageing (Tasmania) (2003, p. 5) commented that elder or 'grey care' may become a large burden for the community, organisations and employees as well. Therefore, it can be argued that flexible work arrangements are important in order to meet employees' needs related to caring responsibilities.

Duxbury and Higgins (2008, p. 6) noted that elder-care is more likely to be shared than childcare, and the demands of each sort of care are different. Employees with elder-care responsibilities are more likely to report difficulties in balancing work and home responsibilities than those with no elder-care commitment (Neal, Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton, Emlen & Boise, 1990). The likelihood of a person needing to provide care to someone else increases with age, peaking for women between 55 and 64 years of age and for men aged over 75 (Neal et al, 1990). If mature-aged people are being encouraged to remain in the workforce, for many the question of being able to provide direct or indirect care and stay in employment will remain a concern. Similarly, Dobkin (2009, p. 1) found that employees who are caregivers are most likely to be middle-aged and have accumulated the most expertise, skills and institutional memory, and are consequently the most expensive for organisations to replace. Considering the larger cohort of older employees in the workforce, the need for them to provide care is a likely prospect. How organisations respond to providing employees with leave to care for others will need to be considered from both the perspective of the employee and the organisational need, as it will require a range of options and not a one-off or one-size-fits-all approach.

Organisations that have addressed elder-care concerns have typically done so by offering consultation and referral services to assist employees with elder-care arrangements. Employees' success or failure in procuring satisfactory elder-care

arrangements could have a dramatic impact on other employee attitudes and behaviours (Shoptaugh, Phelps and Visio, 2004, p. 181). Organisations are attempting to clarify their roles in this process and develop effective interventions according to Shoptaugh, Phelps and Visio (2004, p. 192) who found that only 11% of their respondents (predominantly female nurses) reported that they were satisfied with their elder-care arrangements.

The House of Representative Standing Committee on Family and Human Services (2006) noted that the current demographic pattern is leading to a 'care crunch' converging particularly on middle-aged Australians who find that they are responsible for caring for both children and ageing parents. The challenge for employees and employers with regard to caring responsibilities is immense and there is no one-size-fits-all approach that will provide access and equity to everyone at the exact times of need. The current literature portrays work-life balance as one of the central components of organisational workforce policies in order to attract, engage and retain employees.

#### **4.3.2 Assessing work-life balance**

The real challenge for organisations is to identify different ways in which work can be undertaken, but the array and types of formal and informal flexibility and other work-life balance provisions are difficult to implement and measure (Bourke, 2008). According to Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 228):

The bottom-line of work-life balance research is whether [organisations] can improve working conditions and subsequent levels of work-life satisfaction in employees in order to attract, motivate and retain [their workforce].

Work-life research is interdisciplinary, spanning sociology, psychology, organisational behaviour, human development, labour economics, industrial relations, management, demography, and women's studies (Drago & Kashian, 2003). Yet, as noted by Bardoel, De Cieri and Mayson (2008), there appears to be a dominance of survey-based research, and while there is a place for the precision of valid and reliable scales, an over-emphasis on quantitative methods runs the risk of masking anomalies and counter-intuitive findings.

According to Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 326), an effective measure of work-life balance should be based on a simple definition that asks employees to rate their current perceptions of balance. This may provide an indication, but given the variation in people's understandings and expectations of work-life balance, it may be considered

subjective, although useful, in informing organisational policies and practices. One challenge is measuring the return on investment, and there is a need for further analysis of the overall cost and benefit of implementing work-life balance initiatives (SSA-Vic, 2005). The ability to measure a return on investment of work-life balance programs and policies is not a refined process or one that can be applied in a consistent manner across all organisations. Haar and Bardoel's (2008) research compared the attitudes between employees who had used an organisation's work-family provisions and those who had not. They found no significant differences in attitudes between users and non-users towards turnover intention, continuance, commitment, recruitment and retention benefits, work-family fairness, and attitudes towards male and female users of work-family benefits.

The types or level of an organisation's work-family provisions may also have an impact on the use or non-use by employees. The level of fit between what an organisation offers and what is needed by employees, either on an ongoing or infrequent basis, may be important to employees and therefore influence their perceptions about their levels of job satisfaction, engagement and continuing employment. Yuile, Chang, Gudmundsson and Sawang (2012, pp. 53) noted that:

...organisations need to ensure that policies offered are of benefit to individuals and that individuals require many different types of policies depending on their own personal needs or life situations... there is evidence that work-family programs increase loyalty and commitment to the organisation and reduce absenteeism and turnover...

Workplace provisions for work-life balance appear to be a major contributor to employees' level of job satisfaction. Parkes and Langford (2008, p. 276) found the strongest predictors of satisfaction with work-life balance were wellness and flexibility, followed by team work, role clarity, resources, rewards and recognition and safety, but that job satisfaction was a small (but significant) predictor of work-life balance. Satisfaction with work-life balance was also significantly predicted by diversity and supervision, but not ethics, according to Parkes and Langford (2008). In this study supervisor or management styles, workplace culture, communication and career development were not rated highly as predictors of satisfaction with work-life balance (Parkes & Langford, 2008, p. 276). The number of regular and overtime hours worked, along with age, parental status and salary, independently predicted work-life balance, according to Parkes and Langford (2008, p. 274). They found that satisfaction with work-life balance generally increases with age, except between the ages of 30 to 49

years, because of the impact of caring for dependents (Parkes & Langford, 2008, p. 275).

Lawton and Chernyshenko (2008) hold that offering employees the options of choosing the benefits they want has positive effects for both the individual and the employer, by selecting only the benefits employees value the most. This has flow-on effects in terms of job satisfaction, enhanced attraction and organisational commitment; but it is individually driven, unlike awards or collective agreement determinations.

Public sector organisations in Australia have focussed on work-life balance questions, and the APSC State of the Service Employee Survey Results (APSC, 2006) noted that employees were generally satisfied with their work-life balance. About two-thirds (63%) of employees agreed that their workplace culture supported people to achieve a good work-life balance and 68% of employees were satisfied with their current work-life balance. The satisfaction rates for work-life balance are particularly important, given that many continue to report working long hours, with 56% of employees reporting working more (35%) or significantly more (21%) than their standard hours (APSC, 2006). The foregoing indicates Australian Public Service [APS] employees' satisfaction with work-life balance and also that employees are working longer hours. Data are not available to enable comparison with other public sector jurisdictions. Whether these findings are consistent over time would also be useful in assessing the quality and uptake of work-life balance provisions, satisfaction with support for work-life balance in the workplace and actual hours worked.

How work-life balance provisions contribute to employee attraction, engagement and retention requires measurement or evaluation. Bardoel, De Cieri and Mayson (2008) found that failure to measure the impact of work-life initiatives is increasingly recognised by Australian HRM practitioners as a barrier to the effective management of work-life balance. The Equal Employment Opportunity Network [EEONA] (2008, pp. 6-7) survey asked respondents to identify the expected outcomes of flexibility initiatives, which were noted as: recruitment, retention, employee engagement, maximising the performance of staff; and to be an employer of choice. Excluding the last item, these are similar to other noted work-life balance findings, but there are similar questions relating to their development and implementation. Organisations are faced with the dilemma of trying to arrange their employees to have flexibility in their work arrangements, and also determine which arrangements are needed by employees and how these arrangements can be successfully provided and managed. Further research

is warranted in this regard to examine how employee and manager perceptions influence and impact on the provision of flexible work and organisational outcomes.

#### **4.3.3 Work-life balance and flexible work**

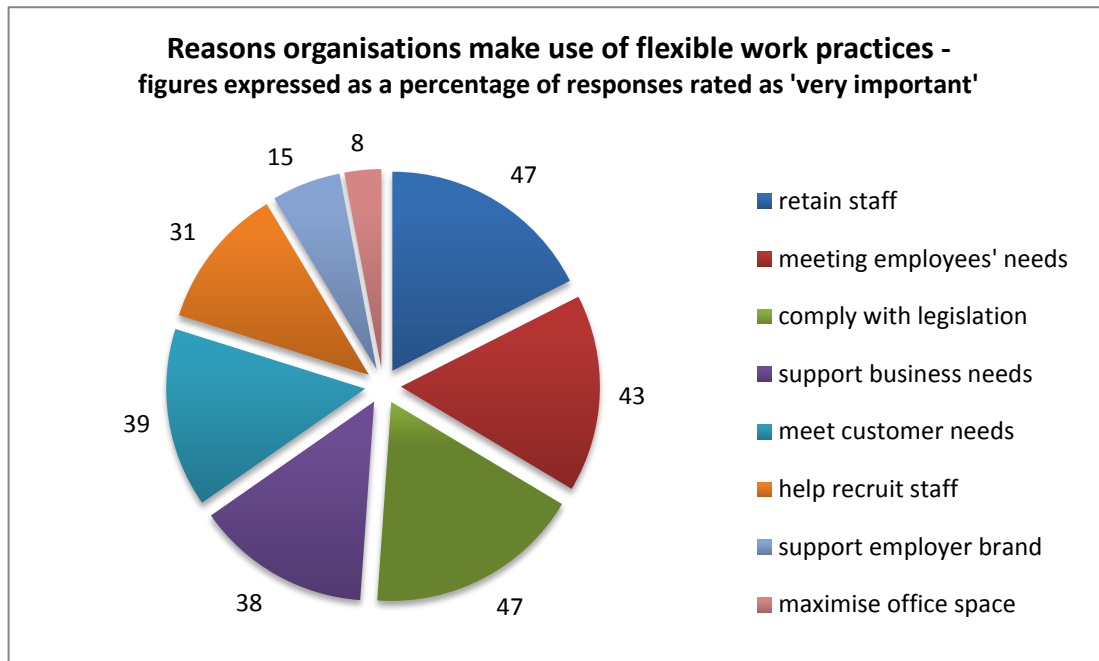
Kelliher and Anderson (2008, pp. 419-424) examined the relationship between flexible working practices and employee perceptions of job quality, finding them generally strongly and positively related. This research identified that at least half of all flexible workers had chosen to work that way for reasons other than caring responsibilities. Different types of work-life balance provisions also affect levels of job satisfaction and will vary across organisations.

Perhaps one of the key issues surrounding work-life balance provisions that Toten (2006) identified is that there are formal and informal provisions, which may be required once, several times or continuously. However, the research is limited in its ability to identify patterns or the use of the different types of provisions. The State of the Service Report for 2003-04 reported that an important measure of work-life balance is whether employees are satisfied that their supervisors would support their use of flexible work practices (APSC, 2004). Eighty-one per cent of respondents were satisfied that their supervisors would support the use of flexible work practices such as flex-time, personal leave, flexible working hours and part-time work. These findings indicate the important role that managers have in managing flexible work arrangements and in implementing organisational policies.

#### **4.3.4 Organisational outcomes and benefits of work-life balance and flexible work arrangements**

Work-life balance has implications for employees and employers alike. The Diversity Factory (2006, p. 1) noted a recent study that found that supporting employees and their families is not the main reason why employers offer these initiatives: nearly half of the organisations indicated that they provide these initiatives to recruit and retain employees, and 25% reported that they offer them to enhance productivity and commitment. Retention, recruitment and meeting employees' needs were all strong reasons given by organisations for providing flexible work arrangements. This is reinforced by the data in Figure 3, which show the reasons why organisations have implemented flexible work arrangements.

**Figure 3: Organisational reasons for adopting flexible work arrangements**



Source: Adapted from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005, p. 8)

Research by Managing Work/Life Balance International (2005, p. 15) found that overall, work-life strategies and programs have contributed to the organisational bottom line by: reducing turnover by an average of 3.6% compared with best practice organisations; reducing absenteeism by an average of 3.7%; an increased return rate from parental leave by an average of 21%; and increased employee satisfaction by an average of 13%. Similar findings were reported by McCuiston, Wooldridge and Pierce (2004) and Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough (2008).

Kelliher and Anderson (2008) asserted that the benefits of diversity to organisations include an improved bottom line, competitive advantage in recruitment and retention terms and superior business performance. McCuiston, Wooldridge and Pierce (2004, p. 85) found that most research participants (senior executives across a number of different industry sectors) agreed that leading a diverse workforce requires considerable time, energy and skills; but the benefits outweigh the costs and the authors identified the need for leadership and effective positioning of skills and talent in the workplace.

Benefits arising from the implementation of work-life balance through flexible work practices included: reduced recruitment and turnover costs; reduced absenteeism costs (particularly among employees with family responsibilities); higher and earlier return rates from parental leave; and increased employee commitment, morale, loyalty and job satisfaction. From the organisational perspective, the following benefits were

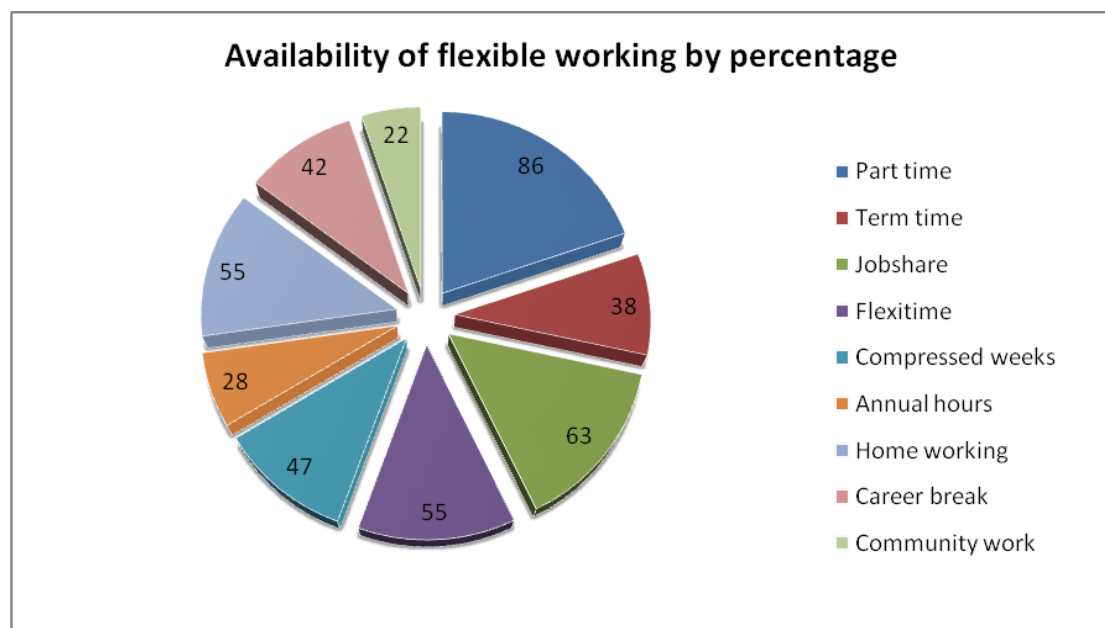


noted: more efficient use of labour, combined with reduced operating and overtime costs; improved return on training and development investments; improved customer service; development and maintenance of organisational cultures that accept change and creative solutions in order to improve business outcomes; and easier compliance with the demands of equal employment opportunity and workplace relations legislation (Toten, 2006). Given that not all workplaces are able to provide a full array of flexible work provisions, there is a need to better understand the dynamics of work-life balance provisions and how to manage them.

The literature from the APSC (2004) indicated that its public sector employees find flexible work arrangements beneficial to their work-life balance; there are also findings relating to excessive hours being worked and other factors that detract from employee engagement and job satisfaction. The findings in this regard deserve further consideration as to how flexibility can be provided whilst still meeting organisational requirements. If public sector employment is exposed to different requirements and is under resource constraints, then further examination of how flexible work arrangements are determined, deployed and managed in public sector agencies is necessary.

The range of flexible working options and accessibility varies by organisation and by individual needs. Figure 4 illustrates the range of flexible working arrangements (by percentage).

**Figure 4: Types and availability of flexible work arrangements**



Source: Adapted from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005, p. 6)

Similarly, from a manager's perspective, workplace flexibility is a business imperative because it optimises recruitment, boosts retention of key talent, promotes employee productivity, engages employees, cultivates quality customer service and reduces costs associated with turnover (Swanberg, 2009, p. 1).

The foregoing suggests that most of the benefits could be related to costs of replacement and recruitment, leave costs and associated productivity gains. Employee turnover costs have been reported as being between 93% and 150% of the departing employee's salary and up to 200% for a highly skilled or senior employee's salary (Bardoel, 2006, p. 253). Orientation costs and training and development costs for replacement employees would need to be added to this figure.

However, the assessment of benefit remains difficult. Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough (2008, p. 230) suggested that whether work-life balance is a realistic goal will depend on the capacity to respect important differences between people and fluctuations over time in the fit between the needs, goals and purposes of individuals and organisations. Work-life balance policies alone do not guarantee the attraction, engagement and retention of employees. Work-life policies need to be adapted to different cultural, economic and social conditions (Poelmans, Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 230). Workplace cultures and management styles would also need to be considered in this light, or such policies would be ineffective (Poelmans, Kalliath & Brough, 2008, p. 230).

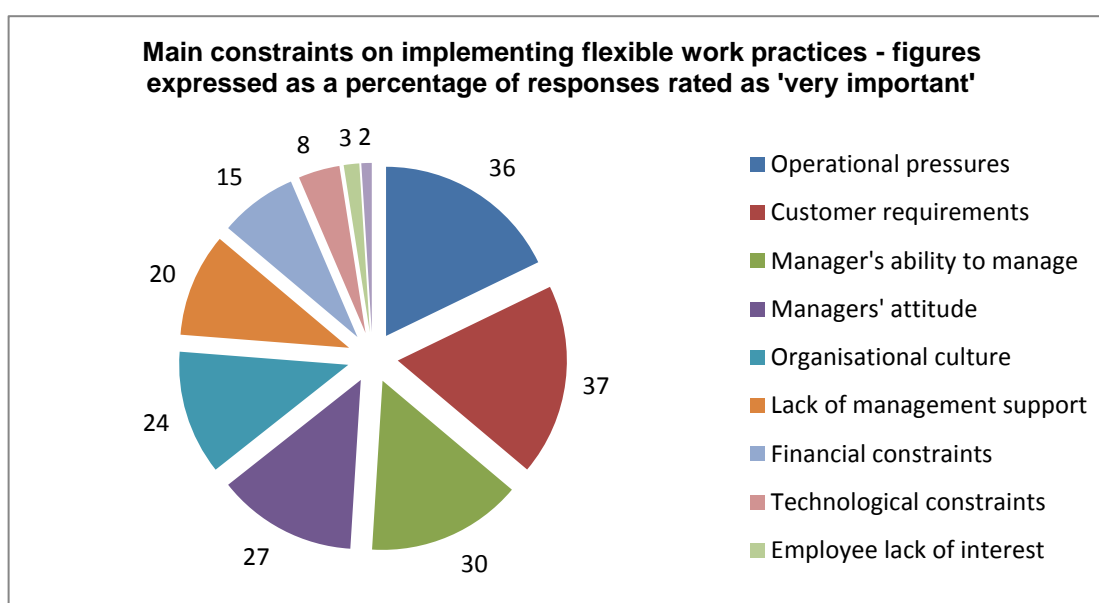
Organisational people-management approaches, practices and strategies warrant examination. Bardoel, De Cieri, and Mayson (2008) noted that in the past, if organisations have provided resources and support for work-life balance, it is often because it is a 'nice' thing to do for their employees and, in the absence of standards and measurement, is perceived as not being related to the strategic development of HR or business outcomes. This identifies the need to align HR policies and practices, with the aim of meeting both organisational and employee needs effectively.

The implementation of work-life balance provisions is related to attraction, engagement and retention, but as Brough, Holt, Bauld, Biggs and Ryan (2008, p. 267) stated, there is missed evidence regarding the cost-effectiveness of work-life balance and family-friendly policies. Research links these policies to reduced levels of employee turnover, increased employee satisfaction, commitment and productivity and decreased rates of physical and emotional disorders associated with work-life conflict (Bardoel, 2006; Brough et al, 2008; Poelmans, Kalliath & Brough, 2008). However, there is a lack of rigorous analysis as to the actual benefits of work-life balance measures in either private or public sector organisations or across industry sectors.

### 4.3.5 Organisational barriers and challenges in implementing work-life balance and flexible work provisions

Research has identified a number of barriers or constraints to the implementation of work-life balance provisions. Figure 5 identifies such constraints and barriers found by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development [CIPD] (2005). Customer requirements and operational pressures rated highly as a constraint or barrier to implementing flexible work practices. The CIPD survey was cross-sectional, and involved a number of public and private sector organisations.

**Figure 5: Constraints and barriers for implementing flexible work practices**



Source: Adapted from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2005, p. 17)

Employees relate directly to their managers rather than the organisation as a whole, so manager behaviour can constrain flexible work practices. Fifty-five per cent of respondents to one study reported that one in ten reported to a non-supportive manager, and one in three reported to a manager with inconsistent management behaviours (Duxbury & Higgins, 2008, p. 16). The presence of formal and informal 'barriers' often also restrict (or block) employee access to work-life balance policies (Bardoel, De Cieri & Mayson, 2008). This raises the question of barriers that may be related to manager behaviour, which may be difficult to identify or assess in certain organisations.

Bretherton's (2008) study of two Australian organisations found that managers do not generally trust 'flexible' workers, and that many managers do not know how to ensure that performance, commitment and engagement are maintained when employees are not in the workplace 'full-time' (either because they work from home or are part-time).

This may apply across both age and gender groups, and may be based in organisational culture or be an indicator of the lack of leadership or management training or ability. This is noted by SSA-Vic (2005), which identified barriers related to management skills and attitudes—the persistence of traditional workplace cultures and a lack of appropriate supports, systems and services which, in turn, prevent a greater uptake of work-life balance options.

Other implementation barriers identified by EEONA (2008, p. 9) included: a lack of commitment from managers (including the Chief Executive Officer) (29%); a lack of resources to ensure effective implementation (23%); diversity being neither perceived as a business priority nor integrated into mainstream business processes (18%); a general lack of awareness of the significance of diversity issues (9%); the culture of the organisation (9%); and, in particular, 9% commented on barriers associated with a 'boys club' or male domination.

Many of these points are identified and supported by various researchers (CIPD, 2003, Faoro, 2008; Poelmans, Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Employee requirements regarding work-life balance are not static, and organisational perceptions for estimating the benefits will need a good measurement tool. In essence, managers provide the critical link between an organisational policy that promotes workplace flexibility and day-to-day practice, yet little attention has been given to ensuring that managers have a high level of knowledge, the confidence to manage difficult issues, and implementation skills (Bourke, 2007, p. 4).

Though managers might understand the business case for workplace flexibility, they could still lack confidence in dealing with difficult implementation issues, as demonstrated when managers say that they are worried that enabling one person to work flexibly will open a floodgate of requests, or that one person's flexibility will create conflict within a team (Bourke, 2007; Pitt-Catsouphe, Matz-Costa & Besen, 2009). Such measures also reduce employees' lack of confidence to request work-life balance provisions (HR Daily, 2009), or perhaps, as Calderon (2009, p. 1) holds:

Flexible work policies appear to be commonplace already... but they appear to be paying 'lip service' to work-life balance; employers seem reticent to embrace flexible work policies which require adjustments to not only the way organisations operate, but also how they 'think'.

Abbott and De Cieri (2008, p. 303) acknowledged that the provision of work-life balance measures are largely a matter of managerial decision-making; however, managers' decisions can and will be influenced by the views of stakeholders such as

employees. Therefore, work-life balance policies will develop from the interactions between managers and other stakeholders, including employees. It is unlikely that all employees hold the same values, so the interactions will be complex. HR managers [need] to understand the diverse needs of their workforces and to develop policies and practices that address those needs (Abbott & De Cieri, 2008, p. 307). However, the complexity of designing, implementing and managing policies is noted and so too is the need for HR to understand the importance of providing managers with the appropriate tools and knowledge. With changing priorities and goals in the public sector, and given the resource limitations imposed on public sector organisations, additional research that explores the linkages between flexible work arrangements with attraction, engagement and retention is needed.

Managing Work/Life Balance International (2005, p. 15) identified some of the important emerging issues about flexibility, finding that 70% of surveyed organisations stated that their future priority is to provide guidelines for leaders to ensure that decisions regarding each employee's access to work-life policies and programs are fairly and equitably made. However, only 33% of organisations had provided guidance or training for managers on managing employees who use flexible work options. This further indicates a need for sound management practices and the appropriate development of managers and supervisors in this area, and highlights the importance of good communication.

Hill, Grzywacz, Allen, Blanchard, Matz-Costa, Shulkin, and Pitt-Catsouphe (2008) called 'workplace flexibility' a poorly understood and ambiguously defined concept. From the organisational perspective, the goal of flexibility is to enable the organisation as a whole to adapt to rapidly changing demands placed on it by both internal and external forces. In contrast, from the employee's perspective the goal of workplace flexibility is to enhance the ability of individuals to meet all of their personal, family and occupational needs. It is assumed, however, that as a by-product, the organisation will indirectly benefit from increased efficiency, effectiveness and greater productivity (Hill et al, 2008). Therefore, attraction, engagement and retention policies and practices need to consider the needs and aspirations of organisations and employees alike.

Organisations can choose from a myriad of flexible arrangements, and Ilsoe (2009) holds that flexitime arrangements have the most powerful effect on employees' work-life balance if [employees] are allowed to manage [flexibility needs and arrangements]. However, one choice employees may opt for in order to achieve a better work-life balance is to downshift. The research of Breakspear and Hamilton (2004, p. vii)

involved in-depth employee interviews and focus groups in Australia, and found that downshifting is when employees choose to reduce their hours of work, change to lower-paying jobs or change careers, and is used to achieve a more balanced life—with around half the respondents emphasising that they had had enough of the stress of trying to juggle competing demands. Other reasons to downshift included: a clash between personal values and those of the workplace; reacting against managerial pressures; and the devotion of their energy to something in which they didn't believe. Organisations should consider how down-shifting can benefit not only the organisation, but also the individual, and, if managed well, may prevent the loss of the employee and their skills and knowledge.

#### **4.3.6 Flexible work arrangements and HRM**

Implementing flexible work practices involves challenging assumptions about how things must be done and coming up with new and innovative ways of utilising staff: rigidity, inflexibility, fear and not knowing what to do or how to do it appear to be major psychological barriers for employers (Calderon, 2009, p. 10). The role of leadership and management is also a substantial factor in considering implementation and success of work-life balance policies. Management issues were also noted by the Office of Public Employment-Victoria (2004), with research evidence of a distinct delineation between senior executives' views and those of their staff who use the policies. Additional research is required to better understand how management actually delivers and implements workforce policies.

Bourke and Russell (2009, p. 5), discussing work-life balance research, constructed a compelling argument that organisational work-life policies have the capacity to enable work-life balance if they are perceived as useable, and that those policies that offer schedule flexibility have the greatest chance of converting the possibility of work-life balance into reality. Hayman (2009, p. 328) agreed with this, adding that the construct of perceived usability is a significant indicator of the availability and use of formal flexible work policies.

One theme that consistently comes through in the literature is the need for work-life arrangements to suit the particular needs of a workplace and its employees—there is no 'one-size-fits-all' model (SSA-Vic, 2005, p. 17; Burke, 2006; Bardoel, De Cieri & Santos, 2008; Yuile, Chang, Gudmundsson, & Sawang, 2012). Therefore, there is the opportunity to consider, given a 'one-size-fits-all' model may not be appropriate, what types of work-life balance provisions are appropriate and whether they vary according to employee age. Given the older age of employees in many public sector jurisdictions,

there is a need to understand if age is a driver or a factor that contributes to organisations requiring different approaches or practices to flexible work arrangements. How the arrangements are determined would appear to be a key factor in shaping organisational success, and at the same time meeting employee needs for work-life balance.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has focussed on work-life balance issues, including various aspects of flexible working arrangements in that context. Organisations offer flexible work arrangements in order to: increase their recruitment and retention potential; to conform to best-choice or employer-of-choice requirements; and/or to address diversity requirements within their organisations. The benefits to be gained by individuals in being able to access work-life balance provisions, including flexible work arrangements, were detailed. The organisational perspectives for providing flexible work arrangements and other work-life balance provisions were described, including the derived outcomes and benefits. Also explained in this chapter was how organisations, now competing in a tight labour market, with identified skills shortages and changing workforce demographics, are faced with attraction, engagement and retention challenges.

It is apparent from the literature detailed in this chapter that employment relationships have changed. The knowledge of how people experience work is important in understanding individuals' needs in order for them to be motivated and engaged at work. The drivers for work-life balance were noted in this chapter; and for individuals these drivers will alter for a variety of reasons. The ability to achieve a sustainable and satisfactory work-life balance is critical to employees' sense of work and their levels of engagement.

The factors noted in this chapter that contribute to engagement are similar to those identified for retention and are also considered to be factors for attraction. Therefore, organisations offering work-life balance provisions also need to be able to measure how these provisions provide a return and benefit in terms of engagement and productivity. Given the predictions for increasing employee needs to care for elderly people, for family care and for other individual needs, there is a real challenge for organisations to adapt their HR policies and practices.

Further examination is needed of the roles and types of flexible work arrangements and how organisations should manage these arrangements so that appropriate and

effective provisions can be designed, implemented and managed. It is apparent that previously formal provisions are no longer meeting the needs of employees or organisations. Further research is needed to explore what and how these provisions should be designed and managed. The literature indicates that a one-size-fits-all model may no longer be appropriate and therefore research is needed to identify and explore what feasible arrangements may indeed meet organisational and employee needs.



## **Chapter 5 Theory, research and practice**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature on Human Resources (HR), Human Resource Management (HRM) and Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) theories, including their definitions and how theories help to explain the role, arrangement and application of HR practice for organisations. It is appropriate to examine how HR and SHRM theory can inform people-management, in terms of organisational workforce management, including workforce structures and HR policy development, implementation and application and evaluation.

The chapter acknowledges that the terms HR and HRM are used interchangeably, with various authors writing about HR as a discipline, as an activity relating to workforce policies, practices and management and as a means of identifying HR as the work section or Department responsible for delivering HR activities.

### **5.2 Defining HR/HRM/SHRM—its role and purpose**

HRM can be described as the way in which the people or human resources are arranged or structured. This encompasses both what jobs will be done by whom, when and how; and also what terms and conditions are applied to employment. HRM is also about how people are managed in organisations, from the initial application or recruitment stage through to their leaving the organisation (Stone, 2002; Kramar, 2006; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). It incorporates the provisions of leave, time and work arrangements, training and development and leadership and workforce planning (Stone, 2002). It also relates to the allocation of work, job design and analysis and the management of the workforce. Therefore, a definition of HR, drawing on the above, would be that HR is the arrangement of policies, strategies and practices under which people are employed, remunerated, managed and developed within a workplace.

Fastenau and Pullin (1998, p. 2) stated that:

...the relationship between employers and employees is explored and developed by academics and HR practitioners in the fields of industrial relations and human resource management. Somewhat like the blind men attempting to describe an elephant, each of these fields describe the relationship from a particular perspective, neither one, academic or practitioner, has been able to satisfactorily explain or to develop fully and realistically the complexity of the relationship.

The field of HR management has emerged from the conceptual, empirical and practical intersection of several disciplines including psychology, sociology, economics and management/organisation sciences, and consequently theoretical development in the

field of HRM has been more piecemeal (Ferris, Hall, Royle, & Martocchio, 2004, p. 231). Fastenau and Pullin (1998, p. 24) found that recent changes had allowed for the different perspectives of Industrial Relations and HRM to be linked, allowing for the complexity of the employment relationship to be explored more fully and realistically. Industrial Relations and HRM perspectives and the complexity of environmental factors also shape employment relationships. This acknowledges the broader perspective of HR, but notes the complexity of environmental factors and introduces the notion of strategy. Here strategy can be considered to be the systematic alignment of HR policies with organisational goals.

The concept of HRM covers the policies and practices used to organise work and to employ people; it encompasses the management of work and the management of people to do the work (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 3). HR policies and practices are to do with the way the work itself is organised. This, then, indicates that HR is not merely the contractual relationship between organisations and employees, but extends to the organisational distribution and structure of work and corresponding practices. This would then mean that HR is not conceptually confined to the personnel section of an organisation, but extends across the organisation and its people.

HRM needs to be understood as a management process that operates at more than one level and includes attempts to manage individuals and to build a functioning workplace society

Boxall & Purcell (2008, p. 7)

Theorists such as Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle and Collins (2001); Ulrich (2007) hold views similar to Boxall & Purcell (2008, p. 7), who argue that:

HRM is about building both 'human capital' (what individuals know and can do that is valuable to the firm) and 'social capital' (relationships and networks among individuals and groups that create value to the firm). While there is often much that individuals can achieve through their own skills and drive, they are always acting within a larger social context. They are inevitably affected by the quality of workforce organisation and capabilities and the attitudinal climate in which they are embedded.

Boxall and Purcell (2008) point out that HRM extends past the contractual employment components to include organisational culture, required skills and management practices or styles that in reality constitute HR.

Ulrich (2007) noted that too often HR focuses on what it does (create talent, shape culture, invest in technology, create leaders etc.) rather than what it delivers. Ulrich (2007) holds that determining HR progress requires starting with the premise of value,

which is defined more by the receiver than the giver. HR needs to determine who receives the value it creates and what each stakeholder gets when HR does its work well. Employees receive value from HR, as evidenced by employee competence, commitment and contribution (Ulrich, 2007, pp. 40-44).

Supporting this, Ulrich and Smallwood (2005, p. 139) stated that an organisation's capabilities are the 'deliverables' from HR work, and depict HR as an active organisational player with outcomes that are desirable both to the organisation in terms of performance, and to stakeholders. In considering a stakeholder perspective, Edgar and Geare (2005a, p. 363) noted that:

If it is accepted that employees are stakeholders, then exploring their views on HRM makes empirically testing of some of the assumptions and relationships in HRM more accurate.

For Edgar and Geare (2005a, p. 367), HR practices are designed and developed with the specific aim of encouraging employees to willingly 'go the extra mile for the organisation'. In effect this means eliciting high levels of commitment among employees. HRM initiatives implemented by practitioners should be those most appropriate to meet the needs of employees. These practices should be performed well, as it would appear to be the quality of the HRM practice that counts rather than the quantity (Edgar & Geare, 2005a, p. 377). Here HR is more than the organisation and delivery of remuneration arrangements, but also covers the structures and practice of work arrangements and management. Moreover, it suggests that HR's contribution to the organisation is important to the organisation's success and sustainability. Kramar (2006a, p. 40) holds that HR has been shown to contribute to organisational performance in a number of ways: by acquiring people with the required capabilities, motivating and retaining these people, developing a positive psychological contract, and contributing to the development of strategy.

### **5.3 HR and SHRM**

One of the most important changes to HR in recent years has been its adoption of a strategic approach, which allows it to extend beyond its traditional activities of delivering HR to aligning HR activities with organisational goals (Kramar, 2006a; Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). From a theoretical perspective, HR specialists can be involved in the development of strategy and assist line managers to implement policy and manage their people. Line managers can then take greater responsibility for managing people and are required to develop skills and knowledge in HR (Kramar, 2006a). However, Kulvisaechna (2006, p. 728) found a difference between what HR

functions seek to achieve and the reality experienced by employees in the areas of recruitment, selection, training and development, performance management, compensation and benefits.

HR has multiple roles and responsibilities with respect to employers and stakeholders (both internal and external to the organisation), but its role is not always open to purely quantifiable measurements of performance. In HR-related literature there is increasing interest being expressed in framing people-management initiatives in terms of the resultant increase in value to organisations and to the achievement of their strategies and goals. However, in practice it is difficult to demonstrate the cause-and-effect relationship between people-management practices and organisational performance (Kramar, 2006a).

With organisations needing to develop people and increase performance to remain sustainable and competitive, Garavan et al (2001, p. 48) noted that employers have a responsibility to enhance individual human capital and employability. This, then, requires a process, framework or strategy to provide the best possible means for it to occur.

The importance of HR roles, policies and practices must also incorporate the role and importance of employment contract elements that are unwritten or less tangible. HR management policies and practices significantly influence the psychological contract by signalling to employees the expectations of the organisation as well as what employees can expect in return (Holland et al, 2007, p. 93). Therefore, it is an important challenge for HR managers to ensure the rhetoric of HRM matches the reality as perceived by employees (Holland et al, 2007, p. 93). This highlights that employee perceptions are critical to effective HRM and if psychological contracts differ for individuals, then HR must consider how HR practices and policies could impact on this.

The fundamental priority of any HR strategy is to secure and maintain the kind of HR necessary for the organisation's viability. Boxall (1998, p. 270) found that:

...the employment relationship can be analysed as a defining feature of HR. Mutuality, the quality of alignment between business and employee interests, should be understood as the extent to which the employment relationship works well for both parties.

This means that there is a considered and deliberate approach to arranging or structuring the workplace (and people's activities and employment arrangements) to align all activities involving people for the express purpose of enabling the organisation

to reach its goals whilst meeting employees' needs. Wright and McMahan (1992, p. 298) define SHRM as:

The pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organisation to achieve its goals.

An HR strategy can apply for a specific purpose or as a one-off activity, as noted by Bowen and Ostroff (2004, pp. 203-204), who maintained that the guiding logic is that a firm's HRM practices must develop employees' skills, knowledge and motivation so that employees behave in ways that are instrumental to the implementation of a particular strategy. For Bowen and Ostroff (2004, p. 204), the focus is that a strategy shapes employee behaviour towards achieving organisational goals. So whilst SHRM is aligned to organisational goals, there are other organisational strategies that affect the behaviour and performance of employees. SHRM must also understand these and respond accordingly. Ives (1995), in discussing a policy-oriented strategic approach to HRM, stated that SHRM is a concept that seeks to integrate human resource values and practices within corporate objectives. Ives (1995) regards HRM as a concept, but noted the alignment between HRM and organisational objectives. However, Ives (1995) did not suggest the degree to which it should be applied or how it could be measured in practice.

SHRM is not static; it needs to be agile and to adapt to changing environments and challenges. 'To sustain HR advantage in the mature context, the organisation needs to add further disciplines that are more deeply institutionalised' (Boxall, 1998). In more recent times, HRM has had to become a strategic player in the organisation and become more adept at identifying possible challenges to maintaining organisational capability (Wright, 1998; Boxall, 1998; Stone, 2002). A superior system of HR planning, which identifies and integrates key human variables with other strategic concerns, is required in contemporary workplaces. Research suggests that even very large organisations have problems developing sophisticated strategic planning systems that incorporate a framework of strategic HR objectives capable of structuring internal debate and decision-making (Boxall, 1998; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). For Boxall (1998, p. 277) solutions are to be found in the recruitment and retention of leaders who have exceptional HR insight, but at some point, a coalition of managers must evolve the conceptual framework and generate the consensus for its ongoing application. At a minimum, a shared understanding between the firm's most influential managers and its top HR specialists, which persuades other key managers, seems essential (Boxall, 1998, p. 277).

This is indicative of SHRM's top-down approach, where senior management sets the parameters and drivers for workforce management.

Allen and Wright (2007, p. 89), drawing on the writings of Boxall (1998) and Boxall and Purcell (2000, 2003), said:

SHRM is a young field that represents an intersection of HR and SHRM literature... one in which people and management are seen as the key elements of competitive advantage.

Deery (2003) reviewed Boxall and Purcell's work (2008) and noted that there are three goals of strategic HRM: labour productivity, organisational flexibility and social legitimacy. The existence of the first two goals is supported by theory and practice and the third goal, for Boxall and Purcell (2008), is that organisations should always strive to be good employers, willing to embrace their social and legal responsibilities and be respectful of their obligations to employees. However, at times, there is an obvious tension between these goals. Allen and Wright (2007) agreed with this but did not suggest a method for aligning HR practices and policies and defining the determinants for deciding these (type, size of organisation or workforce, industry) nor how to measure the alignment or success of SHRM.

Kramar (2006a) agreed, but held that it requires HR specialists to take a longer-term view of HR and to audit the organisation across all HR activities and required delivery of goals. Strategic management of HR involves two phases: strategy formulation and strategy implementation. The management process of people and HR issues is not a simple, straightforward one and the process of strategy formulation and implementation throughout all areas of the organisation, including the HR area, is not rational, logical, value-neutral or static (Kramar, 2006a).

Similarly, Wright (1998, pp. 187-191) adopted Wright and McMahan's (1992) definition of SHRM and asserted that there are at least four components involved. First, it focuses on an organisation's HR (people-management) as the primary resource to be strategically 'leveraged' as a source of competitive advantage. Second, the concept of 'activities' highlights HR programs, policies and practices as the means by which the people of a firm can be deployed to gain competitive advantage (Wright, 1998, pp. 187-191). Third, both 'pattern' and 'plan' describe the goal and the process of strategy; a consistent alignment or design that could also be described as 'fit'. Fourth, that the people, practices and planned patterns are all purposeful, constituting 'goal achievement' (Wright, 1998, pp. 187-191).

The research of Sheehan, Holland and De Cieri (2006) identified that the HR function continues to accept and adjust to the strategic partner role. Results indicated that the shift to a more strategic position for HR involves further challenges, including the development of business breadth in the HR career base, the need for improved measurement and a broader commitment to attraction and retention initiatives. It is also evident from this research that the management of the range of roles expected of HR professionals may emerge as a challenge. Theories of SHRM must also address the changing facets of management practice and the ongoing need to continue to grow HR people-management skills and knowledge. For example, O'Donoghue and Wickham (2008, p. 1) noted:

... that in Australia, as elsewhere in the Western world, factors such as the globalisation of competition, the 'tightening' of skilled labour markets, advancements in technology, the growth of the knowledge economy, and the need for flexibility and expertise in the workplace have each represented strategic challenges to which firms have had to respond.

In improving our understanding of HRM and the performance relationship, there is a move away from universal-type models of HRM to better understanding the specific bundles of HR practices that might apply to specific situations (Allen & Wright, 2007). In this context Allen and Wright (2007) acknowledge the complexity of HRM and SHRM, stating that in order to achieve the performance of HR there must be consideration of models other than best practice. In this discussion of HR theories it could be concluded that theory must consider the ever-changing environmental factors in order to gain a better understanding of the different roles and importance of HR within different organisations.

### **5.3.1 Different theoretical approaches to HR**

Kramar (2006a, p. 29) noted that three theoretical approaches have been used to explain the link between people-management and business performance. First, a 'best practice approach' argues that a set of HR policies will contribute to high organisational performance in all situations, measured against other organisations, with a focus on a high-performance work system. This requires understanding other organisational policies and practices and, more importantly, the environment in which they operate. It may not be appropriate to adopt a different industry approach to HR practice and management, as industry barriers and challenges will differ. Best practice provides for a point-in-time perspective and is a 'now' focus, which may impede or discolour the long-term planning and delivery of HR.

The contingency approach, according to Kramar (2006a), argues that the nature of the HR policies developed in a particular situation should be influenced by factors in the internal and external environments. Kramar (2006a) described a 'configurational' approach in which HR policies should both support strategy and reinforce one another. The key to organisational performance lies in selecting 'bundles' of HR policies that support the strategy, culture and other functional strategies. These 'bundles' of HR policies, then, become extremely important in their selection, design and implementation; as is the need to consider the environment, organisational culture and longer-term goals, challenges and barriers. Given the contemporary challenges facing organisations in terms of sustaining capable and performing workforces, the contingency perspective of SHRM can be considered to have merit.

As noted, there are a number of different SHRM theories. For Allen and Wright (2007, p. 91), 'the resource-based view of SHRM proposes that firm competitive advantage comes from the internal resources: people'. This theory holds that an organisation's employees (the resources), through their skills, knowledge and productivity, can provide an organisation with a competitive edge in a competing and dynamic market. Hence, this theory is based on the premise of competition and arranging the resources (people) to the best possible advantage in a competitive market. It does not mention the differences between public and private organisations or that public organisations are not expected to be competitive in the sense of making larger profits than other similar organisations. Boxall and Purcell (2008) outlined the differences between best-fit and best-practice approaches to HR and SHRM: best-practice draws upon the successful approaches and strategies adopted from across industries. Best-fit approaches follow the contingency or configurational approaches, which adopt strategies and approaches that consider an organisation's current or future environment, resources and goals.

Meznar and Johnson (2005) argued that in contingency theory, corporate performance depends (or is contingent) on a variety of factors. Specifically, organisations must consider their internal capabilities, as well as external conditions, in plotting their path (strategy) for success. According to contingency theory there is no single 'right' strategy that organisations should pursue, and this theory proposes that the appropriate fit between strategy and structure leads to improved performance, and argues that it is the fit between strategy and structure that leads to improved performance, not the structure itself (Meznar & Johnson, 2005, p. 126). Hence, the importance of the role of HR or SHRM is significant in regards to the strategies adopted



to attain organisational goals, the structures for effective workforce management and employee needs.

Also important is how HR policies are developed, given the context of internal and external environmental factors. Delery and Doty (1996, p. 808) maintain that in contingency predictions, the relationship between the use of specific employment practices and organisational performance is contingent on an organisation's strategy. Boxall and Purcell (2008, pp. 83-84) claimed that good HR performance involves dealing with multiple goals, and that there are 'bottom lines' in HRM, including economic and social legitimacy goals that involve management trade-offs and dynamic tensions. All models of HRM work through their impacts on employees through two levels: on the individual level and, through employee attitudes, on the collective level.

At the heart of this is a principle concerned with alignment: with the need to align management and employee interests... As a general rule, all [organisations] benefit from policies and practices that help them to align their interests with those of employees

Boxall and Purcell (2008, pp.83-84)

Edgar and Geare (2005a) and Kramar (2006) agree with this principle. According to Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 84):

Research on how employees respond to different kinds of managerial policy and behaviour, and the links from these responses to the organisation's performance, will lead to other important principles.

This again highlights the importance of having an effective bundle of HR practices and policies—for both the individual and the organisation.

### **5.3.2 HR performance and structure**

Becker and Gerhart (1996, p. 797) stated that both the HR system and function must have, as their principal focus, a set of properly aligned HR policies that solve business problems and support the organisation's operating and strategic initiatives. However:

...although empirical research has been less than compelling thus far; the theoretical and practitioner literature suggests that simply instituting best-in-class HR programs and practices from a functional perspective will have the type of strategic impact that a properly configured HR system will. A set of practices that have individual, positive effects on performance may be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a larger effect on firm performance.

Understanding the alignment between the executive (senior management group) and HR is part of the strategic alignment prescribed in SHRM (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). The

roles of HR executives and those of senior HR professionals are also pivotal if the alignment between organisational goals and workforce management is to be clear and effective. There is a distinction between the duties of HR executives and the roles of HR professionals; the roles of the HR executives have changed more than those of rank-and-file HR professionals with the advent of SHRM (Fisher, 1989). HR executives are more likely to be charged with responding to the regular changes in a constantly changing external environment, and HR professionals are more likely to be responsible for administrative or managerial duties focussed within the internal environment. The external environment, given the changing workforce factors already identified, poses a challenge to HR executives to formulate responsive strategies that are able to be effectively implemented (Fisher, 1989; Boxall & Purcell, 2008).

In an effort to be more strategic, HR managers have been urged to focus less on operational personnel activities and to emphasise becoming strategic business partners to line managers (Ulrich, 1997). For Teo and Rodwell (2007, p. 268) this means that there are two facets of HR's changing role: HR's involvement in strategy and the transfer of HR activities to line management. The consideration of HR as a strategic business partner and resource depends on the centrality of HRM in achieving the link between the HRM function and the strategic management process (Eisenstat, 1996; Ulrich, 1997).

Teo and Rodwell's (2007, p. 278) study of Australian public sector organisations found a number of issues relating to the strategic roles of HR and its relationships with senior management and line managers. The linkages between senior management and line management, with the devolution of HR functions to line managers, has resulted in some friction, causing a threat to the smooth delivery and management of HR activities. Such friction could be related to competing priorities or deadlines, communication tangles or the lack of appropriate training and support to line managers.

Teo and Rodwell (2007, p. 278) noted that HR managers should consider adopting strategies to improve their relationships with line management and put more energy and resources into legitimising their roles and status within their organisations, especially among the senior management group. The perceived effectiveness of the HR department was found to be influenced by the degree of involvement of the HR function in operational activities, which in turn increased its level of influence and strategic integration. That is, HR managers are faced with the challenge of ensuring that they do not give up their activities associated with operational HR if they want to be more strategic and seen as effective. This approach to SHRM sees the roles of

mangers as important and states that HR is a partner that must be strategic across all areas of the organisation.

In discussing SHRM, and HR systems and policies there is a need to understand the culture of organisations in order to design and develop the right types of strategies, policies and corresponding management styles. Schein (1990, p. 111) noted that there is a definitional problem with 'culture', describing it as 'what a group learns over a period of time as it solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problem of internal integration'. For Schein (1990, p. 111) any definable group with a shared history can have a culture, and within organisations there can be many subcultures.

Patterson, West, Shackleton, Dawson, Lawthom, Maitlis, Robinson, and Wallace (2005, p. 380) suggested that organisational climate represents the descriptions of the things that happen to employees in an organisation, and is behaviourally oriented. Organisational culture comes to light when employees are asked why various patterns exist. The question is answered in relation to the shared values, common assumptions and patterns of belief held by organisational members, and it is these that constitute organisational culture. Organisational culture is defined as a set of shared values and norms held by employees that guide their interactions with peers, management and clients (Patterson et al, 2005, pp. 110-111). Therefore, HR or people-management frameworks must have an understanding of culture and the important role it plays in employment relationships. It is therefore a contingent aspect for sustainable and effective workplace management. It would appear from the literature that the impact of organisational culture on SHRM could be considered to a greater extent from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

Ageing populations, generational values and differences, changing technology and changes to employment and management frameworks have all contributed to the changing landscape of HR, both in theory and practice. These factors can be described as contingency variables that organisations have had to address. As described in the literature (Kramar, 2006; Hutchings, 2006; ABS, 2007d; Faoro, 2008, these factors have impacted on SHRM and highlighted the need for strong, aligned and effective strategies, policies and practices in order to attract, engage and retain employees.

The key to developing HR strategies that attract, develop and retain essential employees is to understand what motivates them (Holland et al, 2007, p. 21). Attraction, recruitment and selection are considered to constitute the key initial interface between the individual and the organisation. Along with these primary areas,

values and ethics also act as important sources of attraction as employees become increasingly discerning about who they work for. New policies and practices concerning retention and human resource development are changing. Job design, job analysis and team building contribute to the day-to-day experience on the job, determining what people actually do at work, how effectively they do it and where it can lead (Holland et al, 2007, p. 28). In an environment characterised by skills shortages and an increasingly discerning workforce, it is crucial for employers to review how jobs are constructed, and how they are connected, developed and perceived by employees.

### **5.3.3 Theory to practice—addressing challenges**

Another challenge faced by HR is the ability to quickly adapt and change to address internal and external concerns. IBM Business Global Services (2008, p. 2) maintains that organisations must be capable of predicting their future skill requirements and collaborating across their organisations, connecting individuals and groups that are separated by organisational boundaries and cultures. In addition, organisations must be able to continue to deliver effective HR practices and policies for sustainable attraction, engagement and retention of their workforces. These elements underpin effective SHRM.

Hutchings (2006, p. 280) believes that one of the variables facing HRM is an ageing workforce and generational differences. HR managers need to recognise that one-size-fits-all psychological contracts, career management and pre-determined work-life balance provisions are of limited effectiveness. Responding to the demands of specific employees and employee groups means that HR managers need to understand the demographics of their workplace.

Towers Perrin (2008a) noted that HR is focused on factors aligned with talent management objectives, including performance management, organisational communication, succession planning and retention programs in order to achieve workforce and organisational success. This emphasises that HR has a critical role to play as steward of the organisation's talent agenda, and should be focusing on programs that support workforce performance optimisation, communication, succession planning, retention and training. Therefore, there is a need to guide strategic directions around having effective bundles of HR policies and practices to achieve effective outcomes for the organisation and its employees.

According to Towers Perrin (2009), organisations assess employees' receptivity to different combinations of benefits and examine the trade-offs employees are willing to

make among differing portfolios of benefits, based on a combination of perceived value and relative cost. People early in their careers, for example, might give up a modest salary increase in favour of better career development or training opportunities. Mid-career employees might value a flexible work schedule over access to other benefits. Such variations bear implications for awards and agreements, and may also serve as indicators for future individual and organisational requirements. This has implications for attraction, engagement and retention in having an effective bundle of HR policies and practices, both in the present and for the future.

Bardoel (2006, p. 246) stated that:

...as companies become more sophisticated in their work-life initiatives, they are likely to adopt a strategic focus in which the company attempts to integrate work-family measures with other important HR initiatives, and to frame them as part of the company's overall business strategy.

The 'job for life' was once an accepted part of the employment landscape, but today that no longer applies (Mercer Australia, 2008, p. 14). There is no longer a linear relationship between education and training, work and retirement. People jump between education, employers, careers, salaries, travel, family commitments, financial commitments and geographic locations. Employers need to prepare for a workforce in which a single employee value proposition is no longer a realistic approach; instead, multiple value propositions designed for each market segment will be required (Mercer Australia, 2008, p. 17). The challenge is to provide for the individual whilst balancing the considerations of costs, what employers are able to provide and what employees value most. Sheehan, Holland and De Cieri (2006, p. 137) identified that a fundamental change in HRM practices is the focus on finding more imaginative ways to attract and retain employees that will be required in the future for successful SHRM.

SHRM will also need to address skills shortages. Delaney and Huselid (1996, p. 949) point out that organisations can adopt various HRM practices to enhance employee skills and that HRM systems can be described along three common dimensions. The first is how HR practices intend to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of the organisation's employees. This includes recruiting, training, selection, socialisation and other practices. Such practices seek to build specific relevant skills or increase the level of those skills (Delery, 1998; Dyer & Holder, 1998; Applebaum, Bailey, Berg & Kallenberg, 2000; Lepak, Bartol & Erhardt, 2005; Wright & Kehoe, 2008). The aim with regard to capabilities is to ensure that the organisation has the skills and skill levels required. The second dimension is the degree of investment in HR practice functioning required to motivate employee behaviour. Practices such as incentive pay plans,

performance bonuses and performance management systems primarily aim at managing employee behaviour. Third, the HR practice function needs to provide opportunities to participate in substantive decision-making regarding work and organisational outcomes (Wright & Kehoe, 2008, pp. 13-14).

What evidence is there of organisations addressing demographic changes in their pool of prospective and current employees? Patrickson and Ranzijn (2004, p. 11) stated that:

...there is little evidence that HRM practitioners have adopted people-management practices that reflect the changing demographic pattern; previous activities to assist older employees have been generally ineffective and tended to focus on practices to reduce and eliminate the more visible forms of discrimination.

The question of ageing workforces and resulting 'hype' does not always provide an accurate picture, and the challenge is how to craft complex ways of enhancing workforce capabilities in the future (Doughney, 2003, p. 25). To Doughney (2003, p. 25), the concerns packaged under the 'older workforce' label are really about workforce planning and renewal in changing economies and about all employees; about gender, workforce diversity and management. They are about organisational culture as a whole: how to transmit, maintain and shape it over time. All of these are in the realm of HR and SHRM (Doughney, 2003).

Employee satisfaction with HR practices also plays a pivotal role in developing and implementing HR, and this, too, forms part of a SHRM approach. Kinnie et al (2005, p. 9) examined the links between employees' satisfaction with HR practices and their commitment to the organisation. They found that commitment of employee groups is linked to satisfaction with different HR practices, which has significant implications for managers. The design of HR strategy becomes problematic as managers face a tension between the need for a unitary approach and one that takes account of the particular needs of different groups within their workforce (Kinnie et al, 2005, p. 24). On one hand there is a strong need to treat employees in the same way; there are important legal, ethical and moral imperatives to ensure consistency of treatment. On the other hand, evidence shows that the commitment of employee groups is linked to satisfaction with different HR practices (Kinnie et al, 2005, p. 24).

The alignment between employees' interests and the organisation's needs is important, since higher levels of organisational commitment are linked to organisational support that meets employee needs. Commitment is particularly important in influencing

appropriate behaviour and, via performance, the achievement of business goals: According to Kinnie et al (2005, p. 24):

SHRM needs to take account of both business strategy and employee interests

This has tended to be negated in debates on best-fit practices; the task, then, is one of knowing what to emphasise for each employee group (Kinnie et al, 2005, p. 25). Effectively, there is a need to identify the common and specific triggers of organisational commitment for different employee groups (Kinnie et al, 2005, p.25) and:

This, in turn, raises cost issues for the employer: customising policy may be expensive and questions will be asked about the likely return on investment. The key factor is how HR policies are perceived by employees and concern by managers for the design and implementation of these policies and how they are actually implemented and experienced as HR practices.

One approach and strategy to meet the current and anticipated workforce challenges is that of workforce planning [WP]. Stone (2002, p. 47) noted that planning is a process of systematically reviewing HR requirements to ensure that the required number of employees, with the required skills, are available when they are needed. WP has evolved this process into considering future employees' terms and conditions of employment, including flexibility in work arrangements, training and development, retention and attraction practices. WP can be described as part of the SHRM approach and provides the foundation for establishing an effective HRM program and for coordinating HRM functions (Nankervis, Compton & Baird, 2005). It also allows the HRM function to position itself to take advantage of fluctuations in the economy and labour market. The likely effects of future economic, social and legislative conditions, or organisational changes can be converted from constraints and pressures to challenges and opportunities using WP.

The failure to adequately plan for an organisation's human resources can result in losses in efficiency and substantial costs to the organisation through unfilled vacancies, expensive replacement training, over-hiring or fragmented career management (Nankervis, Compton & Baird, 2005, pp. 108-109). Human resource (workforce) planning according to Nankervis, Compton & Baird (2005, p. 56) involves translating the organisation's objectives into HR activities, from recruitment through training, development and career management, to the separation of employees by retirement and retrenchment; and involves a close relationship with organisational strategies and objectives. It also involves systematically forecasting an organisation's future demand

for and supply of employees (Werther & Davis, 1989). Both elements are parts of SHRM theory and practice.

WP is strategic in that it considers external and internal factors and links together SHRM practices and policies. It is a dynamic process, involving the need for frequent modifications or changes of direction in response to changing economic, political, social and organisational conditions. It is concerned with matching labour demand and labour supply projections within the internal and external contexts of organisations (Nankervis, Compton & Baird, 2005). This can then be considered as HR's longer-term strategic planning and must be in line with the organisation's longer-term goals and demands.

The Public Sector Industrial and Employee Relations Department (Qld) (2001) stated that WP provides managers with a framework for making informed staffing decisions in line with an organisation's mission, strategic plan and budgetary resources. It also provides a means of integrating a range of HRM strategies, including flexible work practices, succession planning, staff development, pay equity, performance pay and the use of temporary employees to meet work productivity demands or meeting organisational goals.

Following planning is the development stage. Workforce development is a broad umbrella term used to encapsulate a wide range of factors pertaining to individuals, the organisations within which they operate and the systems that surround them (Skinner, Roche, O'Connor, Pollard & Todd, 2005, p. 2). Further to this, workforce development represents a multifaceted and multilevel approach to supporting and sustaining effective work practice, and includes strategies at the level of the individual worker, team, organisation and broader system (i.e. government policy, funding, legislation and regulations). Workforce development requires major paradigm shifts as it refocuses thinking away from an exclusive orientation on training to one that encapsulates factors such as organisational development, change management, evidence-based knowledge transfer and skill development. It also involves strategies to: facilitate and support evidence-based practice; and remove or reduce barriers to effective work practice (Skinner et al, 2005).

Skinner et al (2005) hold that 'best practice' in workforce development incorporates policies, programs and initiatives that are evidence-based, multi-level, sustainable, continuously evaluated, participatory and involve key stakeholders. Each of these elements also underpin SHRM, as demonstrated by the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts (2008, pp. 1-2), whose vision is a workforce achieving high-



quality outcomes and where workforce strategy is shaped and guided by three strategic outcome areas: workforce sustainability, workforce capability and workforce optimisation.

This workforce strategy identifies the key factors of sustainability, capability and optimisation, includes organisational requirements and imperatives and acknowledges the dynamic environment in which the organisation operates. This description also fits SHRM in practice. The definition of sustainability is of interest: all organisations wish to be successful in their endeavours, but is sustainability a critical factor? Griffith University (2009) adopts the World Commission on Environment and Development definition of sustainability as 'the forms of progress that meet the needs of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their needs'. In an HR context, AHRI (2009) claimed that the key to workforce sustainability is to prepare for the needs of the future while minimising disruption and dislocation to the lives of today's employees. Skinner et al (2005, p. 12) hold that sustainability refers to the establishment of enduring mechanisms to secure the human and financial resources required to deliver high-quality and effective service. They do not clearly identify the alignment to organisational goals, nor do they identify management or communication practices to provide leadership or sound policy implementation and management.

The literature (Skinner, 2005; AHRI, 2009; Griffith University, 2009) uses the word 'sustainable' in a broad sense and with no consistent definition, and can be used to advance quite contradictory positions. So 'workforce sustainability' needs an agreed definition if it is to be used in academic research and writings

#### **5.3.4 SHRM and challenges in the public sector**

Research and practitioner literature focuses on strategies and practices, and espouses that their application is suitable across large and small private and public organisations. It is therefore appropriate to consider the applicability to the public sector HRM approaches and practices derived from the private sector.

Walsh, Bryson and Lonti's (2002, p. 177) study of public and private sectors in New Zealand found that whilst there were similarities between the sectors, there were also significant differences, mainly evidenced by the much greater degree of formalisation of the HR systems in public sector organisations and a greater emphasis on control. Walsh, Bryson and Lonti (2002, p. 177) found that the reasons for this were: the public sector regulatory environment; differences in key sources of organisational capability and risk minimisation; differences in the nature of work; and the influence of historical

legacy whereby public sector organisations look more like each other than do private sector firms.

Literature exploring HRM and SHRM has noted changes in the public sector since the advent of 'new public management' and at the academic and practitioner level suggestions have been made that public sector organisations should mirror private sector practice (best practice models and approaches to HR and SHRM) (Gibb, 2001; SSA-Vic, 2006; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). The question then arises as to whether perceived or actual differences apply to public sector HRM and SHRM and if so what they are. According to Brown (2004, p. 304), there has been limited theoretical and empirical attention given to this topic.

Brown (2004, p. 304) stated that while changes to the public sector over the last two decades have had a significant impact on employees of public sector organisations and the conditions under which people work, there has been scant attention afforded to the specific field of HRM research and a lack of academic inquiry in relation to the public sector. Brown (2004, p. 304) added to this by stating that contemporary HRM texts often disregard or give only cursory acknowledgement of HRM within the public sector, relying instead on appropriating business models as the general context for HRM scholarship. This links to Wright and McMahan's (1992) comments about the need for empirical research to further develop SHRM theory.

SHRM holds considerable promise for improving government performance by aligning workforce activities and structures to organisational goals (Tompkins, 2002, p. 95). Tompkins (2002) noted that government agencies rarely operate in competitive markets and thus do not develop business strategies in the same sense that private organisations do. They function within larger systems of authority, but without the same degree of autonomy that private organisations have to alter their personnel policies or provide performance-based incentives to employees (Tompkins, 2002, p. 95). Hence it is not only the legislative framework that may restrict the adoption of a private sector SHRM model by the public sector, but other factors that may impact on the successful application of SHRM.

Brown (2004, p. 308) found emerging concerns in relation to new directions and approaches for HRM in the public sector that centre on the organisational effects of ever-increasing levels of technology, changes in population patterns affecting labour markets and new demands on management leadership. Brown does not identify, however, other changes such as changes of government, changes to government

priorities and decreasing levels of resources with which to provide increasing types and levels of public services. For Brown (2004, p. 307):

The different orientations of the public and private sectors mean that while HRM has commonalities across all sectors in its attention to workforce issues, HRM in the public sector will exhibit a range of differences from that of private sector HRM.

Brown (2004, p. 305) goes on to comment that the particularity of the public sector, with a focus on public interest outcomes rather than private interests, may add a layer of complexity that does not easily fit with HRM as a strategic partner in achieving organisational goals. Brown (2004, p. 305) purported that in the public sector the focus is on outcomes other than market share or profit and therefore SHRM or HRM may need to be structured differently in terms of having HRM as strategic (or pivotal) partner.

There are a number of differences between private and public sectors, and the management of people resources is one of them. 'Public sector organisations have become a paradigm case of how much can go wrong with HRM within the management process' (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 218).

A large part of the difficulties experienced in the quality of employee relations in the public sector occur because governments (in effect, the owners) change frequently, introducing new philosophies, policy requirements and senior leaders. In addition, the public sector is characterised by high-level policy groups, which can 'dream up' new bureaucratic initiatives, often from elegant theory, but without in-depth management and at a great distance from the people who actually deliver public services

Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 218)

Performance or productivity in public sector organisations also differs from that of private sector firms for a number of reasons. There is a legislative framework that guides and sets minimum and maximum provisions for recruitment advertising, selection, promotion, performance management and remuneration. Reporting frameworks also vary in how performance is measured and reported upon. Changing government priorities can result in program changes or policy redirections where people resources are realigned to suit. This occurs with minimal notice at times, and reporting frameworks are not always changed in a timely fashion for resource realignment to occur (Ogle, 2009). Productivity is very difficult to measure in the public sectors, as outputs are often difficult to define and there is no marketplace in which

they are provided. Furthermore, government agencies are under sustained pressure to improve the quality of their services, which often adds to costs (DCAC, 2007).

Public sector organisations have also faced matters detailed in the literature review in regard to ageing, changing workforce participation, work-life balance and flexible work provisions. These all impact on SHRM and the ability to attract, engage and retain employees. The New Zealand State Service Commission (2004, p. 1) identified that overseas research concerning ageing shows that all advanced jurisdictions (public service authorities) face the situation in which: the proportion of older workers in the labour force will increase more rapidly than any other age cohort; the public sector labour force has a higher proportion of older workers than the private sector, and the education sector tends to have the highest proportion; and advanced jurisdictions have policies targeting older workers, focusing on factors including retirement and pensions, education and training; and flexible working conditions.

The role of SHRM and effective HR policies is not only to align the current workforce to organisational goals, but to also address emerging or future challenges. The performance and measurement of HR is an essential element of SHRM and HR needs the capacity to develop, deliver and continuously evaluate its practices. The role of HR must extend beyond the delivery of workforce management systems and practices and address emerging challenges. For example, Claes and Heymans' (2008) research identified the value of eliciting HR professionals' views about ageing workforces and found a wealth of information that could better inform organisational approaches to the ageing of the workforce.

Adapting to changing environments, reporting frameworks, service delivery and policy changes requires careful planning. The New Zealand State Service Commission (2004, p. 1), in researching and reviewing the ageing factor, noted that: most departments do not have specific policies on managing ageing workforces (e.g. three out of four departments do not consider the issue in their succession plans); health problems and resistance to change were noted disadvantages of having an older workforce; work-life balance and flexible work practices were considered the most important factors in managing an ageing workforce; reduced hours and/or flexible work arrangements were the most practical solutions to the concern of an ageing workforce; and departments would apply the same standards to both older and younger workers. These changes to the employment landscape are likely to lead to adaptive changes to SHRM theory as it needs to consider and address the implications of ageing workforces and changing

employment contracts and needs in terms of HR structure, organisation, workforce management policies and practices, and their application.

Whilst many organisations experience periods of contraction or expansion of their workforces because of changing environments and circumstances, the public sector has had to adjust or adapt its activities during contraction periods, whilst still meeting the public demand, meeting government priorities and facing a continual balancing act to grow people skills and capabilities. Downsizing in organisations means that the work is either no longer undertaken or is reallocated. Management of this is difficult and involves careful planning, and when change is not managed well there may be a number of detrimental effects including low morale, a drop in productivity, a reduction in employee numbers and the provision of adequate training and development or promotion opportunities (Boxall & Purcell, 2008).

Public sector organisations have been affected by the same sort of cost pressures as the private sector. According to Boxall and Purcell (2008, pp. 138-139) drawing on Green, 2001; Smith, 2001; Kersley, Alpin, Forth, Bryson, Bewley, Dix & Oxenbridge, 2006):

Downsizing and budget constraints have been applied while client demands, for example in public education and health, have risen. These pressures have often been as intense as anything in the private sector or worse.

Harel and Tzafrir (2001) agreed that there are number of significant factors that shape the differences between the practices of private and public sectors, the first being the profit motive, where private organisations are judged on their profit rather than the public sector focus on service delivery. The legal and constitutional framework makes the public employment relationship fundamentally different from that in the private sector and in the public sector an employee must respond to executive and legislative authority (Harel & Tzafrir, 2001). In the private sector the profit obtained is deemed to be the key result, whereas in the public sector the end result or goals achieved are not as tangible, given the environment and structure within which they are achieved. It could be questioned, given Harel & Tzafrir's (2001) study, whether HRM's strategic role and alignment is different in the public sector, given that it needs to respond to more than one position: e.g. to the Secretary of the Agency, the Minister and the executive and legislative authority rather than the Chief Executive Officer alone; and how this impacts on SHRM in its approach or application. It is evident from the literature (Harel & Tzafrir, 2001; Kallenberg, Marsden, Reynolds & Knoke, 2006; Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Bach & Kessler, 2007) that the public sector has different structures and challenges

from the private sector, not only in terms of being able to apply SHRM theory to practice; but also the changing demands placed on it that will affect how people-management policies, practices and any alignment with organisational goals can be undertaken within identified constraints.

Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 138) note that there are 'two broad patterns of work organisation are important in the public sector. The first occurs in the public service ministries and local government departments, which are typically much larger and much older than private sector establishments' (Kallenberg, Marsden, Reynolds & Knoke, 2006).

Boxall and Purcell (2008, p. 138) drawing Bach & Kessler, 2007) hold that:

[Public sectors] have therefore relied heavily on tall hierarchies and such bureaucratic devices as job descriptions, job evaluation and performance appraisal systems. To ensure that governments can account to taxpayers for how public funds are spent, pressure for standardisation of conditions have been strong, as have procedures which help to show equity of treatment across different grades of workers and across different individuals.

'The other major pattern in the public sector is the existence of a high degree of highly skilled professional work' (Boxall and Purcell, 2008, p. 139). 'In the public sector, where there are large organisations with tall hierarchies, this means a higher level of bureaucracy can be expected than one finds in private sector professional firms, but it also means a high level of independent action by professionals' according to Boxall & Purcell (2008, p. 139).

Another factor is 'new public management', which imposes on the individual greater mechanisms for accountability such as individual performance targets and performance-related pay (Boxall & Purcell, 2008, p. 139).

Boxall and Purcell (2008. P.139) drawing on the writings of Guest & Conway (2002) stated that 'there is little doubt that the target/audit culture has brought work intensification of a kind that has antagonised public sector professionals, lowering levels of trust in the public sector and exacerbating problems of recruitment and retention (Audit Commission, 2002).

Applying theoretical and practical models of SHRM in the public sector may raise difficulties, given the different size, structure and function and management practices of Agencies and also at the jurisdictional level. HR Policy and practice may be governed by different legislative and reporting requirements and the actual management

practices may vary across Agencies. Public sector jurisdictions and individual Agencies may experience resource scarcity at times, with cutbacks or budget reductions. This may necessitate restructuring or realignment of employment, which can cause performance to drop and can also, because of employment legislation, be costly in terms of redundancy payments (Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Such costs then may be offset by changing staffing structures, reducing service delivery or training and development budgets. Whilst downsizing and/or restructuring are not limited to the public sector, they are perhaps different in that resources (people) are considered in the public domain more than private sector restructures and downsizing.

### **5.3.5 HR and SHRM research in the public sector**

Research identifying the fit of SHRM theory in practice has used different methods to gauge the alignment of SHRM components. Teo and Rodwell (2007) examined the level of operational and strategic involvement by HR departments in the public sector, the influence of HR departments and the level of strategic integration as predictors of HRM performance. The study found positive relationships between the degree to which operational HR activities are transferred to line managers, HR influence, strategic integration and the HRM function (Teo & Rodwell, 2007). Few studies have focused on the role and effectiveness of a public-sector HR department (Teo & Rodwell, 2007, p. 267). Teo & Rodwell (2007) note that there are two facets of HR's changing role in the public sector:—its involvement in strategic matters and the transfer of HR activities to line management. Line managers have shown mixed reactions regarding the transfer of operational HR activities and question the strategic role of HRM functions when operational activities are being devolved to them (Sampson, 1993 & Teo, 2002).

Teo & Rodwell (2007, p. 276) summarised their research findings by noting that the pendulum may have swung too far in terms of the pressure on HR to be strategically involved, and that HR needs to build its strategic value from its core operational activities. This, then, places as much importance on core operational activities as HR's strategic involvement and, for Teo & Rodwell (2007), value derived from the operational level can contribute to the strategic involvement and benefit at the organisational level. This is not stressed or addressed in SHRM theory to the extent that Teo & Rodwell assert. The importance or value of strategic HR and operational HR activities needs to be reinforced at theoretical and practical levels to provide what could perhaps be termed a more holistic approach to people-management.

Another example of research undertaken in the public sector is that of Freyens (2010), which found that Agency leaders are usually poor at integrating HRM functions with

organisational strategy. A lack of adequate planning and not having effective HR management practices, policies or resources can lead to failure in implementing SHRM theory in practice. Freyens' (2010) comment also draws attention to the role of senior management in understanding the alignment of HR with organisational goals. This highlights the importance of not only having effective HR policies and practices, and also the need to have the skills necessary to integrate these policies with organisational goals.

#### **5.4 HR at work—the Tasmanian public sector**

Following the discussion of SHRM theory and differences between private and public sectors, it is of value to consider workforce management in an actual public sector setting. The Tasmanian State Service [TSS] is a state service jurisdiction, and the following comments are provided in order to examine the practical application of HR theory in a public service.

Public sector jurisdictions face legislative requirements as to how they structure and manage their workforces. Traditionally, public sector Agencies operate in isolation from each other, and employment is based on the traditional notion of a 'job for life' (Ogle, 2009a). Most Tasmanian state service Agencies adopt a conservative approach to people-management within legislative guidelines and requirements. Each Agency undertakes its own management practices, including people-management activities, involving attraction, engagement and retention and flexible work arrangements (Ogle, 2009a). Agencies are now beginning to address the looming labour market shortages and changing employee expectations attributed to different age groups at work through research and by developing WP strategies (Ogle, 2009a).

With 'new public management' practices and the economic rationalisation of the 1990s, there have been a number of changes to the management of the public workforce, but these still need to be considered within each Agency's portfolio, given their different approaches to workforce management. However, in the TSS many changes have been applied as a result of legislative directions and adopted by Agencies with a stronger emphasis on compliance than on best practice. Agencies have a considerable degree of autonomy in managing the employment and deployment of employees and formal and informal workplace arrangements. Current policies and guidelines do not stipulate a requirement to manage across Agencies in terms of encouraging mobility or measuring their workplace management to best or even good practice (Ogle, 2009a).



There has been some discussion across Agencies as to how to address attraction, engagement and retention challenges in an applied or concerted way. Some Agencies undertake employee or climate surveys to identify key factors regarding employees' perceptions and expectations about their work and work arrangements. This has, however, not been undertaken across all Agencies. Employee survey results have not equated with substantial changes across Agencies, but some changes to communication and the adoption of Agency 'values' have correlated with positive employee survey results (Ogle, 2008). Adoption of flexible employment arrangements has, in part, been driven by changes in legislative guidelines and as a way of developing contemporary employment management; however, this has not been consistent across all Agencies or job groups (Ogle, 2008).

The foregoing discussion has provided evidence of the complexity of workforce management in the public sector and highlighted how HR management and practices are controlled and guided by legislative frameworks. Changes to public sector management have also been driven by the need for greater efficiency (Teo & Rodwell, 2007; Bach & Kessler, 2007; Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Ogle, 2008). New public sector management approaches have also seen many formerly centralised employer functions devolved down to Agency level. A strict application of SHRM theory to workforce management would suggest a uniform approach. However, given Agencies' unique and specific work requirements, devolved employer functions and the complexity of work management across the whole-of-service or Agency levels it may not be feasible. As noted by Ogle (2008), steps have been undertaken to address contemporary workforce challenges, but this has not been done in a whole-of-service planned manner. This presents challenges to the development and application of SHRM theory.

## **5.5 Advancing theory—HRM and SHRM research**

Many HRM and SHRM studies adopt a managerial perspective rather than an employee perspective (Townsend, Wilkinson, Allan & Bamber, 2011, p. 168). The literature review has identified research of these types that has provided an understanding of workforce management, but Townsend et al (2011) stated that there is value in asking employees in the workplace about their views as a potential means of understanding HRM or SHRM issues.

This thesis has already identified that research is needed into understanding employee needs and identifying the key contributors to building a motivated, engaged and productive workforce. The role of, and input from senior management in measuring HR

effectiveness was also noted in the literature (Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Townsend et al, 2011). Guest (1999) undertook a study based on the view that the impacts of HRM on employees are as relevant as those on business. For Guest (1999) this is necessary, both as an end in itself and also to inform the critical debates on HRM. Legge (1995) claimed that accounts of HRM are the 'voices of management' and that there is insufficient good evidence about how workers react to HRM (this has since changed with the advent of quantitative employee surveys about HRM activities). Guest's (1999) study was concerned with perceptions of fairness, trust and the extent to which management is believed to be delivering on its promises and commitments. It is of interest that Guest uses the term 'react' to describe employees relationships with HRM, although empirical research does not always clearly identify whether it is the reaction to, impact of or the actual types or quality of what HR does that is being analysed, evaluated or reviewed.

Gibb's (2001) research (involving a survey of 2,632 employees in 73 countries) explored a range of arguments about trends in the evaluation of HRM and noted that most methods use either a fit with 'best practice' or with contingencies. Gibb (2001) sought to investigate how employees' 'points of view' could be an alternative model in HRM evaluations, and found that employees reported areas of strength in HRM that include training and development, rewards and levels of personal motivation. Further, Gibb found areas of weakness in HRM: the management of staffing levels, aspects of recruitment and communication and levels of morale in the organisation as a whole. Gibb (2001, p. 332) wrote that the comments in the survey suggest that employees possess a 'memory' and understanding of HRM which is partly self-interested, partly drawn from their common organisational experiences, and partly based on a knowledge of HRM in general. Gibb undertook to understand the dynamics and strengths of employment matters from the employee view and also highlighted the contribution that different philosophies (disciplines), systems and approaches make in measuring and evaluating HR.

Edgar & Geare (2005), who stated that most research and reporting of HRM have ignored the view of employees, believe that employee attitudes are a fitting HRM measure. They therefore sought to see whether there is a significantly strong relationship between HRM practice and employee attitudes if employee perceptions of HRM practice are taken as a measure of HRM performance or effectiveness. They tested the relationship between HRM practice and employee work-related attitudes to examine whether different approaches to the measurement of HRM gave different results. Edgar & Geare (2005) measured HRM practice using employee attitudes to

organisational commitment, job satisfaction and organisational fairness, and found significant results were obtained between HRM practice and employee attitudes, but only when employee reports of the strength of HRM practice were used to measure HRM value and effectiveness. Guest (2001, p. 1099) claimed that further research is needed to test the extent that employer and employee views on HRM coincide or differ and that:

There is now a need for more research comparing the responses of managers responsible for developing and overseeing HRM practices and employees to identify levels of agreement about the operation of practices...

Guest (2001), Gibb (2001) and Edgar and Geare (2005, 2005a) support the view that employees' perceptions about their employment can provide key information about current HR policies and practices. Their research does not identify a base point for measuring HR, nor does it identify how such a measurement is made about the actual range of HR policies or the extent to which HR management is done well across an organisation. What is confirmed, however, is that for SHRM to be implemented successfully there is a strong need to align employee needs (drawn from employee perceptions) with managers' perceptions and with organisational HR policies and practices. Without this alignment, the other components of SHRM would stand fractured from each other, and therefore the prime intent of SHRM in achieving organisational goals would not be met.

Edgar and Geare (2005, p. 537) described the different approaches used to assess the relationship between HRM practice and employee work-related attitudes. This first is the additive approach that involves employees responding to 'yes/no' questions, where the higher number of 'yes' responses leads to the assumption of better HRM. The second is the use of employer self-reports involving the use of response bands such as those contained in Likert scales. Because these are both quantitative studies, the results are limited by the structured survey questions (Guest & Peccei, 1994). Alternative approaches could involve seeking employees' opinions in their own words and without formally or strictly derived questions.

As far as the relationship between HRM practice and employee attitudes is concerned, HRM practice dimensions have been measured using data collected from employees in one of two ways: using additive measures of HRM practice or self-reports about the extent to which particular HRM practices have been operationalised (Edgar & Geare, 2005). For Edgar & Geare (2005) there is a third possible approach, which is to collect

employee views about the operationalisation of HRM practice and then relate these reactions to their attitudes.

Edgar and Geare (2005) noted in their research findings that if managers want to maximise employee attitudes, then implementing lots of practices is not sufficient: practitioners need to be aware that the *way* they implement their HRM practices may be a more important determinant of employee attitudes than the *number* of practices they put in place. This aligns with Kramar's (2006) and Boxall and Purcell's (2008) views about needing the right (effective) bundles of HR policies and practices at any given time to meet both employees' and the organisation's needs. Armstrong (2001) suggested the possibility that it is the *quality* of the practice that counts and not the *quantity*; it may be that practitioners need to undertake regular attitudinal surveys to assess employees' reactions to current HRM practice and plot them longitudinally to identify what is working and what it is not. This, then, relates to how the policies and practices are delivered and managed from the senior management level to HR and at the workforce level.

Edgar's (2003) study examined the extent to which the employee-centred model is used in New Zealand organisations and the relationship between the use of these practices and employee wellbeing. The employee-centred model is described by Edgar (2003, p. 230) as the soft model of HRM where HRM is focussed on employees and their wellbeing; whereas the hard model is organisation-focussed. The findings indicate that most organisations surveyed had moderate numbers of employee-centred HRM practices in place, but that the number of practices in place did not relate to employee wellbeing. Edgar (2003, p. 237) asserted that an explanation for the results is either that employees do not consider all areas of HRM to be equally important, and that the absence of this relationship may suggest that not all HRM practices have the potential to equally enhance employee wellbeing, or that employers have failed to effectively operationalise their HRM practices.

Edgar's (2003) findings suggest that a gap may exist between employer rhetoric about HRM and the reality of HRM as experienced by employees. Edgar (2003, p. 232) observed that, along with the paucity of research on HRM practice in New Zealand, there are even fewer studies conducted there or internationally that look at HRM practice from the employee perspective (the exceptions include Guest, 1999 & Rasmussen, McLaughlin & Boxall, 2000). Edgar (2003, p. 232) found this surprising, given that the employee is, in effect, the actual consumer of HRM and, in the case of 'soft HRM', the supposed beneficiary.

Empirical research into HRM practices has mainly assessed and evaluated the activity from an employer's perspective, and concern has been expressed about the lack of empirical analysis conducted from the employees' perspective (Edgar & Geare, 2005a, p. 361). Their results also provide insights for academics and practitioners in that new policies and practices should be aimed at maximising the potential of people in the workplace. Securing employee commitment has come to be seen as pivotal to the success of HRM and underpinning this relationship is the view that employee attitudes and behaviours can be affected by HR policies and practices. It is this perspective that has been adopted by most HRM researchers, according to Edgar & Geare (2005a), drawing on the writings of Whitener (2001) and Arthur (1994).

Edgar and Geare (2005) noted that if it is accepted that employees are important stakeholders, then exploring their views on HRM makes empirical testing of some of the assumptions and relationships in HRM more accurate. The question of the current importance to the employee of the employment relationship today is a question that has received little empirical attention, so obtaining employee views about HRM allows for the exploration of some of these relationships by providing insights into how effective employees consider current HRM policy and practice to be (Edgar & Geare, 2005).

Employers report on the effectiveness of their HRM policies and practices using information sourced from managers rather than from all employees. Edgar and Geare (2005a, p. 364) stated that:

...the tenet, around which HRM is fundamentally built, is the view that employees are the organisation's 'greatest asset' and therefore should be afforded some voice in HRM research.

The more informed employers and academics become, with regards to employees' views about the importance and value of HRM practices, the greater the probability that initiatives in introducing HRM practices will be effective (Edgar & Geare, 2005). HRM initiatives implemented by practitioners should be those most appropriate to meet the needs of their employees, and these practices should also be performed well, as it would appear it is the quality of the HRM practices that counts rather than the quantity (Edgar & Geare, 2005a). Therefore, there is valuable information to be obtained in seeking employees' views, of the effectiveness of HR, and also about their current employment conditions and wishes for the future. This will assist in ensuring that HR policies and practices achieve the required outcomes for a capable and ready workforce and that is also aligned with organisational goals.

## 5.6 Summary

The literature review has identified a number of workforce challenges: ageing populations, changed labour markets, drivers and demand for work-life balance and generational differences in the workplace. Academic literature also identified the current challenges for organisations in arranging and structuring their workforces in light of changing employee needs, including the identification and examination of the drivers for flexible work arrangements, work-life balance provisions and changes to the components of the employment contract. Adapting to these challenges has been necessary in order to attract, engage and retain the right employees. The necessity here is for organisations to realign their HR practices and policies to meet employee needs and, at the same time, ensure their workforce structures meet their requirements and outcomes. This has occurred in both the private and public sectors, even in times of tight and competitive labour market demands and the ongoing drive and requirement to deliver their services expediently. In the private sector this means sustaining a competitive advantage in the market and returning a profit, whilst in the public sector it has meant trying to align the competing demands for services with finite resources and, as noted earlier, being accountable for their actions to the government and parliament.

SHRM theory is broad, and does not come with a one-size-fits-all approach, nor does it come with a ready-made application or measurement kit. There are many SHRM theories that further extend the scope of SHRM, including best practice and best fit theories. Best practice theory holds that organisations should adopt the practices and policies that are deemed to be the most valuable across the discipline or HR field at any given time. Best fit theory is similar, in that it may adopt policies and practices deemed to be valuable, but it does so in light of a number of contingent factors including current labour market conditions, the market within which the organisation operates, the longer-term goals of the organisation and other environmental factors.

SRHM theory holds that SHRM is the key to organisational performance, and contains the notion of selecting 'bundles' of HR policies that support the overall or principal organisational strategy, culture and other functional plans. Selection, design and implementation of these policy 'bundles' are extremely important; as is the need to consider the environment, organisational culture and longer-term goals, challenges and barriers (Kramar, 2006; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). The literature reveals that SHRM theory has not fully addressed the need for a clear alignment of cultural, environmental and institutional factors. Therefore, in SHRM, if an organisation doesn't have effective

policies and practices then the ultimate goal of aligning its workforce with organisational goals will not be achievable or sustainable.

The test of the effectiveness and value of a theory is undertaken by a number of measures. Discourse about the theory's aims and elements and the theory itself are also tested (and further refined or enhanced) through empirical research. SHRM research continues to develop tools and methods from empirical research activities in order to measure HR effectiveness and efficiency. However, a substantial proportion of this research is quantitative and confined to looking at micro areas (e.g. narrow occupational groups in a specific work setting, studies involving private sectors in a competitive market, etc.). Given the specificity of this type of research, it is only possible to draw minimal linkages to the overall potential of SHRM. Measuring SHRM performance against the principles of SHRM has shown varying results and no single universal method provides an adequate measurement that can be adopted across a wide range of organisations.

Quantitative-based research elicits data, usually drawn from interviews with managers or external stakeholders, and usually excludes employees' views (Edgar & Geare, 2005a). Employees' views are predominantly drawn from structured surveys, in which participants are unable to add additional information. Surveys require a selection from predetermined answers, or answers on a rating scale, which are all based on specific questions. This type of survey does not provide for the views of employees to be obtained openly or allow employees an opportunity to make links between the employment elements from either their own personal experiences or preferences. The focus or scope of a question can be isolated from other elements that participants may believe to be related to their choice of answers. Using survey tools may provide for generalisations to be drawn, but the research in this area is limited to rigid questions about the effectiveness of the organisation's HR section and performance. It is true that some published research seeks to identify what employees perceive to be the benefits of their actual employment in terms of leave provisions or applying for leave. This, too, is limited in its ability to effectively measure HR performance and the quality of HR policies and practices in terms of content and how these assist in employee attraction, engagement and retention. Separation surveys provide valuable information in assessing why employees decide to leave but it may not always be relevant to gather information at the time of separation about how employees valued their employment experience. Surveys can be limited by being quantitative, and there is not a measurement tool to drive the collection, analysis and reporting of free-field comments to use for evaluating HR practices, policies or HR performance.

If SHRM is to be effective, the policies and practices actually employed warrant attention. Legislation, industrial relations and financial capacity to offer above-minimum remuneration, leave provisions, flexible working arrangements and training and development need to be considered in determining an effective bundle of HR policies and practices. In SHRM, HR policies and practices are driven down from the top or senior management level, presumably on the advice of senior HR people, though little is written about the capability or calibre of senior HR to be able to do this well. Measurement of HR policy and practice is limited to the research areas of stakeholder views, activities related to return on investment formulae and narrow elements confined to specific areas such as the HR group's performance.

Research has, as identified in the literature, been undertaken in the public sector to examine or analyse specific areas of HR or to examine, for example, commitment, gender or elements of recruitment or performance. Additional research needs to examine the role of the central Agency in determining employment policies and practices and where a line Agency has autonomy in these matters. Reforms in the APS and other jurisdictions are aimed at increasing flexibility and agility across Agencies to meet Agency demands and needs (Ogle, 2009). This chapter has briefly reviewed the importance of organisational culture and differences between public and private sectors, which will influence how SHRM and HR policies and practices are developed, implemented and evaluated. Reform factors are instrumental to the adoption of SHRM in the public sector and further research and analysis is warranted.

Drawing on the writings of Guest (1999), Gibb (2001) and Edgar and Geare (2005 & 2005a), there is an opportunity to measure HR impact and effectiveness by drawing on the perceptions or views of employees. The ability to obtain information about employees' perceptions about their employment provides an opportunity to explore what HR policies and practices are valued. As noted in this chapter, the quality of policies and practices appears to be more highly valued than the simple quantity.

Given the HR challenges of ageing workforces, generational differences of employees, managing work-life balance and flexible work arrangements, it is valid to consider these factors in terms of an organisation's ability to attract, engage and retain their employees. This encompasses motivation, commitment, engagement, high work performance and other topics that have been empirically researched. The essence of SHRM excellence is having the right people doing the right jobs at the right time and contributing effectively and as planned to meet organisational goals.



The literature review identified a number of key employment provisions including salary, interesting work and flexible work arrangements (for example) as important to employees' attraction, engagement and retention. Finally, it demonstrated the need for additional research to further explore the role and importance of employees' voices. "Employee voice" will be of major importance for organisations to address these contemporary challenges. Research about 'employee voice' is of value, as it contributes to the organisational level of HR by incorporating employee-derived information, which relates directly to the organisation in which they are employed. Further, research of this type provides for a better level of measurement and evaluation in that it is not considered only from a legislative or industrial perspective. This applies to current policies and practices, but it is also valuable in assessing future workforce requirements and, in turn, providing for a better or more considered approach to aligning the workforce with the organisation's goals.

The literature review noted and described the differences between public and private sectors and examined the level of fit between theory and practice for workforce management. An example of theory in practice was described using the Tasmanian State Service and involved the identification of how competing priorities affect workforce management and the drivers that impact on effective allocation of resources.

The challenges described and examined in Chapters 2 to 4 were also considered from HR and SHRM theoretical and practical perspectives. The importance for organisations to structure workforce management in light of these challenges identified a clear need to address attraction, engagement and retention. It is clear that there is a need for HR policies and practices to better reflect the change factors in the workforce. To that extent, the literature has identified a concern of how the ageing of the workforce will impact on organisations in the coming decades. A higher level of understanding is needed about the structures and practices of organisations' workforces in light of the ageing factors identified in the literature if organisations are to maintain appropriate levels of employee participation and productivity. Additional research to assess the differences attributed to different generations, as noted in the literature review, is needed in order to determine what common aspects exist and where differences lie across the different age groups. Being able to identify the differences and similarities of the different age groups is important in determining the appropriate HR policies and practices and, in turn, will contribute to having effective practices and policies in the future. In addition to this was the identification of the increasing need for workplace flexibility to meet employees' work-life balance needs and organisational efficiencies and requirements. Organisations need to understand the drivers from both

perspectives if they are to structure their workforces through appropriate and responsive policies and management practices.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed a body of literature from academic and practitioner sources. It described and examined HR and SHRM theory and practice from a number of different perspectives. It highlighted the challenges and approaches for both theory and practice and how the complexity and effectiveness of HR can affect organisational and employee outcomes. It considered how the different theoretical perspectives address workforce management, structures and practices. This chapter also examined the complexity of aligning HR with organisational goals.

Further, this chapter discussed how employees' perceptions can inform the development of policies and practices, and is therefore a valuable element of SHRM. It highlighted the need to research employee perceptions about employment in terms of attraction, engagement and retention and how this may contribute to developing effective HR practices and policies to meet current and future work needs. The important role of managers and the levels of management discretion in implementing and managing HR policy and practices were also identified in this chapter.

Section 5.6 presented a succinct summary of a number of theoretical frameworks with which to describe and understand HRM and SHRM. The summary further demonstrated a clear need to undertake research to examine how organisations could approach and address the identified contemporary challenges and have effective HR policies and practices for a productive and sustainable workforce.

The literature also highlighted the differences between public and private sector workforce management structures and approaches. Given that public sector jurisdictions' structures and legislative frameworks differ from those of the private sector and they face different imperatives, goals and possible challenges because of policy and service changes, then it is an appropriate setting in which to place the research. This will have benefits in that the research will be considered from the whole-of-service and at the individual Agency levels and therefore may be able to consider what level or type of a centralist approach would best address the identified challenges. Given how age was highlighted in the literature review, this research can consider the implications of an ageing workforce at the public sector level. As such, it can provide real data or evidence as to how public sector organisations approach their workforce management practices and policies to meet the responses and needs of an ageing

workforce. Similarly, the research aims to ascertain what types of flexible work arrangements are of value to employees (across all age groups) and how managers and public sector organisations can use this information to inform their decision-making processes about HR policies and practices. Placing the research in the public sector will allow for a better understanding of how public sectors can structure and manage their workforces and consider the effective bundles of HR practices and policies. The importance of placing the research in the public sector is that findings of the research will contribute to identifying components of employment contracts and management practices for future workforce sustainability.

It is the intention of the research to identify the degree of alignment about workplace policies and practices across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations. The research questions are:

1. What attraction, engagement and retention factors do employees perceive as being valuable? Do these factors vary depending on employees' age?
2. What do managers believe their employees value about their employment in terms of attraction, engagement and retention?
3. Which attraction, engagement and retention factors are evidenced in Agency HR policies and practices?

The research findings will contribute to SHRM theory about how HR policies and practices can be informed by employees' perceptions. They will provide a contribution for identifying and understanding what is valued by employees with regard to their employment. The research is important in that it considers the views of employees of different age groups and therefore goes beyond provisions set in industrial awards, agreements or legislation and the importance of how this in turn contributes to organisational performance and, in turn, sustainability.



## **Chapter 6 Research design and methods**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the research approach, design and method chosen to investigate the research questions. The approach to the research is described in order to provide the rationale for undertaking the research task and the analytical framework adopted. Details of the research design are provided, along with the methods and tools used to collect manage, store, code, organise and analyse the data.

### **6.2 Rationale for the research**

The literature review highlighted theoretical and practice-based evidence of an increased need to understand the employment framework in public sector organisations, both from an organisational perspective and from the employee view. The changing employment landscape has been characterised by tighter labour markets, an ageing population and contemporary challenges emerging and developing within the employment contract. Drivers for organisations to achieve competitive, effective and efficient productivity have also emerged on the cost side, and therefore the economics of recruitment, engagement and retention of employees are now considered to warrant greater attention.

The research presents an opportunity to examine attraction, engagement and retention factors using the common elements identified in the literature review (Boxall, 1998; APSC, 2003; Murray & Syed, 2005; Sayers, 2006; Avery, McKay & Wilson, 2007; Bourke, 2008; Boxall & Purcell, 2008; Towers Perrin, 2008). The literature review identified the unique environment in which public sector organisations operate compared with the private sector, and the challenges faced in attracting and maintaining a public sector workforce. Differences were also noted in the public sector regarding the requirements for attraction, engagement and retention in terms of reporting, accountability and financial resource limitations.

Being able to sustain a capable workforce in order to meet government policies and priorities in delivering the necessary or required services to the public is a constant challenge for the public sector (Ives, 1995; Tompkins, 2002; Ogle, 2009). Changing governments and priorities also impact on public sector workforce management. In combination with this are the legislative arrangements within which public services are provided and the legal framework for public sector employment and management practices. Accountability and responsibility differ between private and public workforce arrangements: the private sector employee is answerable to more than a manager or

director and, in turn, a Board. Public sector Agencies answer to a Head of Agency, a Minister, the Government, Parliament and ultimately the people. They also have overarching legal requirements, with a number of functions regarding employment matters delegated to Agency Heads. Thus, the public and private sectors are different in their make-up and structures, have different legislative requirements and have different accountability mechanisms.

The purpose of the research is to explore how one public sector jurisdiction approaches and addresses the contemporary employment challenges outlined in the earlier chapters of this thesis. There is an opportunity to explore employees' perceptions concerning attraction, engagement and retention. This is the focus of the research, and placing it in the public sector will allow for a better understanding of how public sectors can structure and manage their workforces and consider effective HR practices and policies. The research will involve eliciting employees' perceptions in order to:

- a. extend SHRM theory about how HR policies and practices can be informed by employees' perceptions;
- b. provide a foundation for identifying and understanding what is valued by employees with regard to their employment; and
- c. assess how employees value HR policies and practices and how the management of these policies and practices can be improved to meet both employee and employer needs.

### **6.3 Research aim**

It is the intention of the research to identify the degree of alignment about workplace policies and practices across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations. The research questions are:

1. What attraction, engagement and retention factors do employees perceive as being valuable and do these factors vary with employee age?
2. What do managers believe their employees value about their employment in terms of attraction, engagement and retention?
3. Which attraction, engagement and retention factors are evidenced in Agency HR policies and practices?

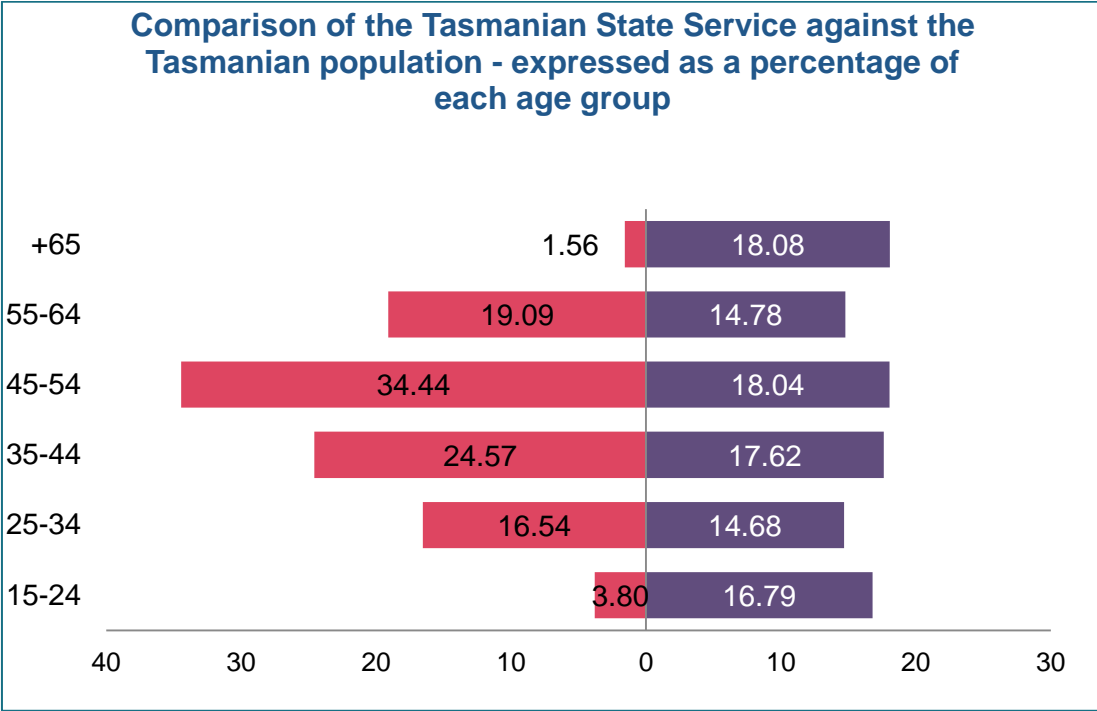
## 6.4 Research setting

The TSS has been chosen for the research setting for a number of reasons. The TSS differs from public sectors in other states in several respects. Tasmania is geographically separated from other states and this leads to a sense of isolation with regards to larger labour markets which, in turn, raises a different set of challenges. The TSS workforce is drawn from a more isolated labour market than in other states, therefore to maintain and develop workforce sustainability and capability, the service faces a number of challenges to recruit and retain quality employees. Other state and territory public sectors have contracted out more services than Tasmania so the TSS provides more direct public services (Ogle, 2009). Therefore, the TSS is involved in the policy development, implementation and delivery of public services. Whilst this occurs in other public sector jurisdictions, it is the geographical location and limited ability to acquire services through external contacts or arrangements that places the TSS in a critical service role. The TSS workforce, comprising over 200 different occupational groups, is located at many centres across the state, and has Agencies that range in size from as few as 43 employees to over 12,000. The TSS has been selected due to its location, occupational and age diversity and the different Agency workforce sizes. Appendix 1 provides additional demographic data for the TSS.

The research setting, therefore, consists of a number of public sector Agencies within the one state jurisdiction. The ability to explore the perceptions of employees from different sized Agencies assists in identifying common elements and in scoping the effects of other variables, including age, gender, length of service, occupational group and work location. Being able to compare information from employees in different-sized Agencies provides a foundation for determining what employees value about their employment. Understanding the representation of a sector within the context of the wider population is important in determining the ability of an organisation to access potential employees from the labour market.

Figure 6 shows that the age representation of the TSS differs from that of the state population in most of the age-group categories, with less representation in the 15-24 year age group and in those aged 65 years and over. All other age groups show a higher representation in the TSS than the state population, so there is a potential oversupply in people in the 15 to 24 and over 65 years age groups and an undersupply in the other age groups.

**Figure 6: TSS compared to the Tasmanian population by age group**



**Tasmanian State Service** **Tasmanian Population**

Source: Public Sector Management Office [PSMO], (2010, P. 15)

Table 3 identifies the diversity of Agencies in the TSS, and identifies the high percentage of permanent employees and a high level of female employees, which is similar in other jurisdictions including the Australian Public Service and the Victorian Public Service (APSC, 2006; State Service Authority: 2006; Ogle, 2009).



**Table 3: Head count by Agency and gender as at 30 June 2010**

Agency	Part 6		Permanent		Fixed-term		Gender total		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts	16	7	182	283	26	43	224	333	557
Department of Education	14	6	2,029	6,786	375	1,380	2,418	8,172	10,590
Department of Health and Human Services	41	30	2,231	7,595	795	1,245	3,067	8,870	11,937
Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources	18	2	298	271	11	13	327	286	613
Department of Justice	20	6	514	503	20	60	554	569	1,123
Integrity Commission of Tasmania	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Department of Police and Emergency Management	10	1	528	329	12	31	549	361	911
Department of Premier and Cabinet	18	10	124	194	7	7	149	211	360
Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment	19	6	743	642	69	78	831	726	1,557
Department of Treasury and Finance	14	3	122	155	11	26	147	184	331
Tasmanian Audit Office	3	0	21	19	0	0	24	19	43
Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority	1	1	45	56	6	8	52	65	117
The Public Trustee	2	0	15	36	0	3	17	39	56
Tasmanian Academy	1	0	79	123	43	33	123	156	279
Tasmanian Polytechnic	5	3	396	686	86	204	487	893	1,380
Tasmanian Skills Institute	2	1	237	115	17	18	256	134	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>7,564</b>	<b>17,793</b>	<b>1,478</b>	<b>3,149</b>	<b>9,225</b>	<b>21,019</b>	<b>30,245</b>

Note: Part 6 includes Heads of Agency, Prescribed Office Holders, Equivalent Specialists and Senior Executive Officers, all of whom are contract employees.

Source: OSSC (2010, p. 62)

Additional demographic information about the TSS can be found in Appendix 1. As in other public sector jurisdictions, Agencies arrange their HR sections differently: some Agencies have large, well-resourced HR specialist sections; others roll HR functions into line management. Workforce management practices differ across Agencies because of different senior management direction and different management styles and practices (Ogle, 2009a). Further, some Agencies are large and impersonal; others small, where people know each other (Ogle, 2009). Having different Agency and HR structures and relationships provides the researcher with the opportunity to assess whether the critical employment themes of attraction, engagement and retention are

perceived similarly across employees and managers from different sized and differently structured Agencies.

#### **6.4.1 Research design**

The research was designed with the aim of answering the research questions regarding the key themes relating to workplace of attraction, engagement and retention of public sector employees.

A mixed method was used, with data gathered by means of employee interviews and Agency surveys. The qualitative components allowed for an in-depth exploration of employee perceptions and the components from both the interviews and the surveys allowed for information to be gathered across the entire TSS. There were three stages to the research design, as detailed below. As noted by Creswell (2003) one of the main reasons for conducting a qualitative study is where the study is exploratory, where the researcher seeks to listen to participants and builds an understanding based on their ideas. This approach is most appropriate in understanding the research questions posed, as will be explained below.

##### **6.4.1.a Obtaining ethical clearance for the research**

The research proposal was submitted to the Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee (University of Tasmania) in October 2008. Ethics approval was granted and all appropriate reporting milestones were met.

During the design phase of the research proposal it became apparent that it would not be appropriate to identify Agencies in the research material. The reason for this was that, given the number of employees within some Agencies or Agency location or activities, it may have been possible to deduce the identity of some informants. Nor was it deemed appropriate to directly identify any Agency, given that participation was agreed to on the understanding that identifying details about each Agency may influence participants' responses at interview. Consequently, Agency and individual participants' names were removed and were replaced with codes.

#### **6.4.2 Research stage 1**

Similar to Sayers (2006), the theoretical framework and the research questions drove the choice of research methods. The methods were selected to discover and ascertain the different understandings or meanings of working life for employees. As Sayers (2006, p. 109) noted:

People make sense of different situations differently from other people, and not simply as a direct response to what is happening to them from outside. The best way of discovering those meanings is to directly ask the individuals...

A qualitative approach was adopted for this stage of the research in order to explore employees' perceptions and to allow their views to be voiced in their own words. Qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of people's experiences, perspectives and histories in the context of their personal circumstances or settings (Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis & Dillon, 2003). It provides for a greater understanding of the meaning and experiences of people's lives than quantitative research (Bignault & Ritchie, 2009). In the first stage of this research, the adoption of a qualitative approach allowed participants to describe their understanding of work and the meaning of work using their own words, and the freedom to voice their views about their employment in a free and open way.

Bryant (2006, p. 246) holds that qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis can provide the flexibility necessary for gaining an in-depth understanding of individual employee experiences. A qualitative approach also provides for flexibility in that not all experiences are shared in the same way by all individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). An advantage is that atypical responses are not disregarded or given a different weighting. Qualitative analysis enables the researcher to explore emerging themes and examine how they hold under different conditions (Herzig & Jimmieson, 2003). Therefore, qualitative research provides for understanding based not on structured or rated responses, but on a deeper understanding of the themes or topics that are experienced across different conditions by individuals. Another advantage of qualitative research is that it can potentially uncover a more accurate picture of the object of the research, as the underlying perceptions of the participants are explored. Such perceptions are not limited, as in quantitative research, to a paper-based series of questions, or a forced choice between possibly unsuitable options, which frequently disallow further explanation (Sayers, 2006, p.109).

In-depth face-to-face interviews were selected as the most appropriate method and the interview format was designed so that participants could comment on or discuss which of the attraction, engagement and retention elements were important to them. All participants were asked the same series of short, open-ended questions. This allowed participants to draw on their work experiences and provide their perceptions about working arrangements such as remuneration, working hours or team work.

Shacklock (2005) claimed that interviews are highly subjective; therefore, the possibility of interview bias is ever present. An interviewer may influence participants' responses by verbally or non-verbally encouraging and rewarding 'correct' answers (interviewer bias). To address that possibility, participants were assured that there were no right answers *per se*, that the research was exploratory and to that extent their views were being sought without any preconceived notion of 'right' or 'wrong' responses. The other element of interview bias that may occur is when more than one interviewer is involved and the interview components may be treated differently by the different interviewers (Shacklock, 2005). Having one interviewer in this research eliminated that possibility.

The face-to-face interviews were intended to gain a better understanding of employees' views across a range of questions relating to their employment terms and conditions, management styles and ongoing expectations regarding their employment (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990; Tharenou, Donohue & Cooper, 2007). Using in-depth interviews provided the researcher with the ability to explore emerging themes for individual participants without the need for conformity or the risk of selection bias that would occur if using a selected-group or focus-group approach (Minichello et al, 1990, p. 92). As noted by Minichello et al (1990, pp. 93-96):

... in-depth or semi-structured interviews involve topic or guide areas so as to allow for an in-depth examination of people and topics, and are used to gain access to, and an understanding of, activities and events that cannot be observed directly by the researcher.

The key feature of applied qualitative research is that the sample of participants is small, but intensely studied, and that it typically generates a large amount of data, which is coded and analysed (Sayers, 2006). The qualitative component of the research design allowed for the 'lived' experience of employees to be elicited. The number of participants in the research design was initially open, but then limited to 30 as the large amount of rich textual information gathered through these interviews resulted in data saturation, after which little new information was obtained.

The first stage involved undertaking in-depth interviews with TSS employees in order to identify:

- what attracted them to apply for positions in the TSS;
- what factors they valued about their work and employment conditions;
- the perceptions and experiences of employees regarding continuing to work to, or beyond, the minimum retirement age;
- what they hold work-life balance to be; and

- what factors they believe are important for continuing in their employment into the future.

The research focussed on participants in three different age groups: those under 30, those aged 30 to 45 and those over 45. This enabled the elucidation of perceptions and expectations held by different age or generational groups of employees. Given the literature review on generational issues, it was important to have representation of people across all age groups. The selection of the age groups was based on workforce demographics and the age groups used by the ABS in labour market statistics. The involvement of different workforce age groups enabled the identification of any similarities or differences between diverse age groups in relation to attraction, engagement and retention factors, including work-life balance issues and needs.

#### **6.4.3 Recruitment of participants**

Agreement to conduct the research was first obtained from the Director PSMO, following a presentation that detailed the purpose and structure of the research. In November 2008, the Director PSMO wrote to Heads of Agencies advising them of the research and seeking their Agency's participation (see appendix 2 for a copy of this letter). The letter asked Agencies to respond, indicating their preparedness for their employees to participate in the interview stage and for Agency participation in the survey stage. All Agencies initially agreed to participate in the study.

As requested by the Director PSMO, the researcher contacted (by email) individual Agencies via Agency HR Managers or Directors of Corporate Services between mid-February and August 2009, reminding them of the invitation to participate in the research. The invitation to employees and managers was circulated via Agency noticeboards and intranets (see appendix 3 and 8). Interested employees were requested to contact the researcher by email or telephone and, upon contact, were provided with additional information about the research and the content and format of the interview. No interested employees sought to withdraw from the study.

The invitation was sent to all Agencies at the same time, with a two-week response time provided. There were no predetermined choices made by Agencies regarding which employees could participate. Participation was based solely on the responses by interested employees. The selection of participants was based on their ages, so that each age group was represented amongst the employee participants. No other sampling criteria, such as gender, award classification or level, were applied to the selection of interviewees. When an expression of interest was received from a person

of a particular age group in which there was already sufficient representation, he or she was advised that the numbers for that age group had been met. However, if additional interviews were required because participants withdrew from the study, further contact would be made (this was not actually required).

Following consent to participate in the interview stage of the research, interview times were arranged. At this point, participants were provided with an information sheet (invitation) that provided additional detail about the research, and a consent form (see appendices 4-5). This document detailed the scope of the information to be sought at interview as well as advising the rights of participants. Interviews were conducted in private locations mutually agreed to by the participants and the researcher, either in the participants' workplaces or in the researcher's work office. One interview was conducted by telephone because of the participant's work location. The employee interviews were undertaken between March and September 2009 (see appendices 6 and 7 for interview format and guide).

Each interview commenced with an explanation of the purpose of the interview and confirmation that the participant had received an information sheet with details of the researcher, supervisor and contact details for any complaints, and also advising of the right to withdraw from the study, without prejudice, at any time. Participants were further advised verbally (as well as on the information sheet) that the interview would be recorded for the purposes of transcription and analysis. Recording of the interviews allowed the researcher to focus on the conversation, and therefore no hard copy notes were made during the interviews.

#### **6.4.4 Employee interviewee characteristics**

Thirty people were interviewed; Table 4 details their characteristics and participants were represented across three different age groups, from full- and part-time employment categories, status and gender.

**Table 4: Participant Characteristics**

Characteristic	Number
Male	13
Female	17
Part-time	5
Full-time	25
Permanent	26
Fixed term	4
under 30 years of age	7
30 to 44 years of age	8
Over 45 years of age	15

The interviewee group can be described as occupationally diverse, as demonstrated by Figure 7, with representation across different occupational groups from administrative/clerical, technical and professional groups. Additional demographic data is provided in Appendix 14.

**Figure 7: Participants by classification**

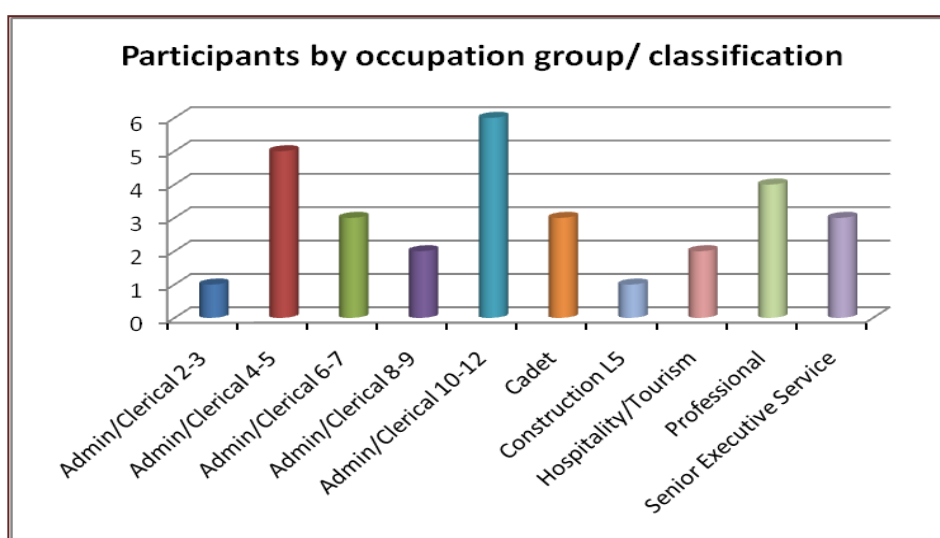
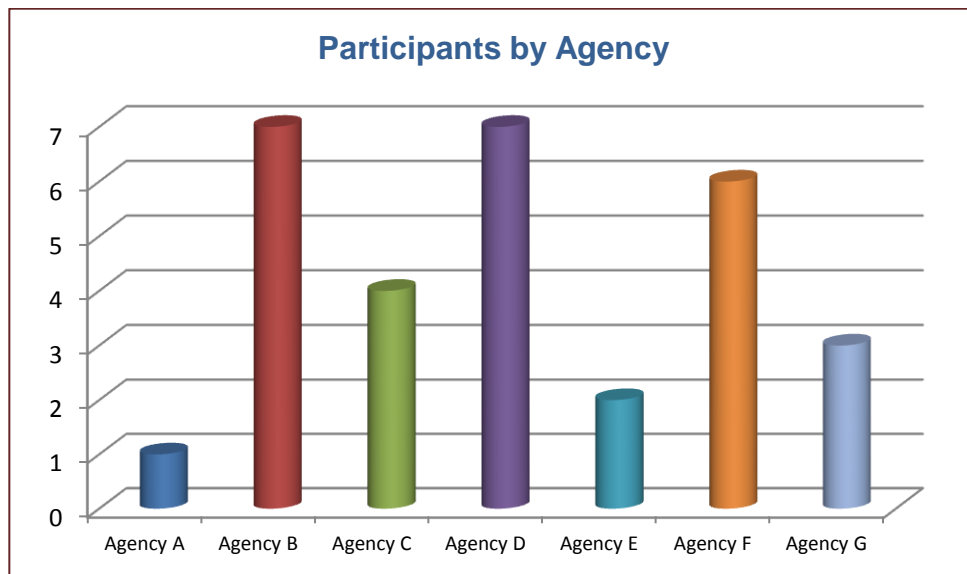


Figure 8 illustrates the participant representation across the agencies involved. One Agency had agreed to participate in the research but withdrew at a later date. Employees agreeing to participate in the research were employed across seven of the Agencies.

**Figure 8: Participants by Agency**



Each participant was assigned either an 'E' or an 'M' code to be recorded on their interview transcripts in order to maintain confidentiality. 'E' codes indicate an employee and 'M' codes indicate managers. Employees and managers were involved in stage 1: the assignment of the different codes did not mean that their responses to interviews in this stage were coded differently nor was the interview data differentiated or segregated by their assigned codes.

#### **6.4.5 Interview data management**

Data collected at the first stage of the research were digitally recorded and then transcribed into Microsoft Word. Transcription was undertaken by the researcher because there is, according to Bazeley (2008), real value in this approach as the researcher continues to be acquainted with, and therefore gains a deeper understanding of the data.

The transcription process builds knowledge about the participants' views and words. Each interview transcription was recorded as a separate file and appropriate employee or manager codes were assigned to ensure confidentiality. All subsequent transcription, coding and analysis activities were undertaken using the participant's assigned code. Data relating to age, gender, length of service, qualifications, current study activities and employment status, employment category and award classification level were also entered into NVivo, which allowed for querying and reporting across the different attributes after the coding stage. The first stage of the analysis is immersion in the data, which extends from the interview through to the transcriptions and re-reading of the transcripts, through the coding process. It provides a detailed examination of



what was said and sets the basis for the scope of the analysis (Green, Willis, Hughes, Small, Welch, Gibbs & Daly, 2007).

Interview transcripts were offered to participants to allow them to correct or to clarify any of the material recorded and transcribed if they wished. Requested transcripts were subsequently forwarded by email. The researcher contacted participants two weeks after interview transcripts were provided, if participants had not already made contact, in order to gauge whether they believed the transcripts were accurate records of their interviews. No changes were requested except in one case in which a participant contacted the researcher by telephone and requested additional clarifying information to be included, which was done.

#### **6.4.6 Interview coding**

Coding was undertaken after transcription and refined during the analysis phase, ensuring that the codes assigned were relevant and linked to the data to allow for robust data analysis. Coding is the process by which data are arranged by category or topic in order to reflect on the content of the coded segments. This was done so that the researcher could then retrieve and review all the data relevant to a given category. This builds depth of understanding about the data, which in turn provides the mechanism by which research questions can be analysed (Richards, 2005). The coding phase was undertaken by the researcher, which negated the need for inter-rater reliability tests. The reviewing of the coding and refinements were consistent, as they were conducted by the researcher. This also allowed the researcher to remain acquainted with the data and therefore to gain a deeper understanding of it at the coding stage and through to the analysis stage. This approach is supported by Bazeley (2008).

The initial coding of each transcript was undertaken using the text of the interview, and sections were then coded into categories based on the interview structure and the themes from the literature. Nodes were created in NVivo and data from each interview were subsequently coded to the related nodes. A node was labelled to relate to each category for a particular topic or aspect. Therefore, nodes represented the topic and represented a preliminary category from which further categories were created for additional but related material. The arrangement of the categories provided what can be described as a hierarchical structure of major categories ('parent' nodes) and subsidiary categories ('child' nodes). The initial categories followed the interview guide (topic areas) and additional categories were created where information provided was in addition to or complementary to the topic.

Data were coded first to the interview discussion areas, e.g. the initial attractors to apply for a position in the TSS and factors that contributed to the current level of engagement. A copy of the preliminary nodes created in NVivo can be viewed in Appendix 15. The data coding was reviewed after the initial coding and the coding was refined, with data coded exhaustively into every category relevant. The data were also placed into new codes for the three themes of attraction, engagement and retention. This cross-coding (or extended coding) enabled the analysis to be thorough and to consider emergent themes. This was necessary because it became evident that what attracted people to apply initially and what attracted them to apply for subsequent positions was different for some participants. Similarly, the perspectives of participants in relation to flexible work arrangements had, for some, direct relevance to attraction, engagement and retention; for other participants flexible work arrangements may not have been an attractor in their initial applications but was for subsequent positions.

The re-coding and refining of categories enabled the layering of information so that the linkages between attraction, engagement and retention, both at the level of the individual and of participants as a group, could be revealed. Reviewing the categories (and their labels and definitions), along with re-coding of the data (where applicable), was undertaken several times to ensure consistency.

#### **6.4.7 Interview data analysis**

The researcher used annotations to record comments about the material, and this later assisted in the structure and to inform the data analysis process. Memos were used to record 'noted' findings and for re-checking the coding of transcript sections into the appropriate nodes, so that information could be cross-referenced across the three themes of attraction, engagement and retention.

The coding and structure provided for consistency in placing the data across multiple themes. This allowed for quality checking of the alignment of the information and also enabled assessment of the content, including the extent to which each participant contributed to the various topics. Because of the breadth of material provided at interview, there was a lot of cross-over between the different sections, Answers to, 'what made you apply for your position?' or 'what do you like about your job?' could be the same and therefore apply to the themes of attraction, engagement and retention. Therefore cross or multiple coding enabled the analysis of the data to be undertaken and provided the ability to better understand participants' perspectives about their employment in a layered or complex manner, rather than as isolated or disjointed factors. Analysing the data at different times (in order to query differences or

similarities, as noted above) also provided a quality check that an individual's comments were not mis-coded or taken out of context.

#### **6.4.8 Manager interviews**

The second stage of the research involved the interviewing of managers in order to determine how they perceived their employees' views and values about their employment. In addition to this, this stage also sought to explore how managers viewed their organisation's policies and practices and to explore what managers perceived as challenges for the ongoing management of their work areas.

The recruitment of manager participants was undertaken in a manner similar to that of employees. The invitation to participate was distributed in the same way, as was the information sheet, details and consent forms (see appendices 9-10). The selection criterion applied to manager participants was that they must have current direct management and supervision of at least six employees. This criterion was deemed necessary to ensure that they (a) did have actual direct management responsibilities regarding employees, as opposed to managing a program or policy; and (b) had held a management role for at least two years. A total of nine managers (from five of the seven Agencies participating in stage one and two of the research) were interviewed, either in the researcher's or the manager's work location, where privacy could be maintained.

Manager interviews also included additional questions and comment on topic areas such as employee training and development needs and workforce management concerns, as well as their own training, development and management needs. This research stage enabled a better understanding of how managers viewed their employees and whether this was similar to, or different from, the expectations and perceptions of their employees. As with employees, managers could place different emphasis or weight on different topic areas (see appendices 11 and 12). Managers were asked the same open-ended questions and could comment on their experiences and perceptions. Interviews of managers were undertaken between March and September 2009.

#### 6.4.9 Manager interviewee characteristics

The table below details the characteristics of the managers interviewed.

**Table 5: Manager Interviewee characteristics**

Characteristics	Number
Male	4
Female	5
Part-time	0
Full-time	9
Permanent	9
Fixed term	0
under 30 years of age	0
30 to 44 years of age	1
Over 45 years of age	8

#### 6.4.10 Interview data management

The transcription of manager interviews was undertaken using the same process as the employee interviews. Sections of the transcript files that concerned how managers thought employees perceived their own employment were coded at first against managers' categories for attraction, engagement and retention. The initial categories followed the interview guide (topic areas) and additional categories were created where information provided was in addition to, or complementary to the topic. The initial coding was reviewed and then subsequently compared with nodes relating to attraction, engagement and retention factors, which allowed information to be placed at multiple categories when appropriate. For example, flexible working arrangements or work-life balance information may have been relevant to one or all of the themes of attraction, engagement and retention. This, therefore, provided the ability to code the data exhaustively in every category in which they were relevant.

The placement of the data into categories provided for the complex and rich information to be studied without the loss of data in a mutually exclusion coding process. Managers' views about contemporary workforce challenges regarding attraction, engagement and retention were coded into categories relating to those themes. The preliminary manager node coding can be viewed in Appendix 16. The coding into categories also facilitated the comparison with employee views.

#### **6.4.11 Interview data analysis**

Manager data were analysed in the same way as employee data. However, the additional manager data were not sorted by age or gender because of the lower numbers involved. This stage of analysis was to note similarities or differences, which did not require characteristics such as age to be considered. The information in this stage was analysed in terms of the managers' understanding of employee attraction, engagement and retention, and therefore the analysis was based on assessing how managers' views coincided with employees' perceptions. The approach to analysing the data in this format allowed for emerging factors to be identified.

Querying of data was used in the analysis stage. This involved locating information about a particular aspect, for example work-life balance preferences, and to identify the number of matches and the related information. Querying was also undertaken using the case attributes, in order to assess whether there were similarities or differences to be found on the basis of age, gender, length of service, length in current position, caring responsibility, tertiary qualification or, for managers, the number of employees in their sections. An example of this is where employees and managers provided their views regarding flexible working arrangements as a retention factor. In order to ascertain whether there were similarities or differences between employees and managers, the data were arranged to compare key words about this aspect for each group. The results could then be compared to ascertain the level of alignment. Responses to other questions could also be arranged using the two groups, but placed into age groups or gender groups in order to identify whether there were similarities or differences based on age or gender. These data could also be examined as to whether the participants viewed flexible work arrangements differently for retention than for engagement.

Following coding, the data could then be analysed within and between categories (Richards, 2005). The process of reviewing the coding and content allowed the analysis to consider the information across both employees' and managers' perceptions of the different topics. The examination of the data was to ascertain whether there were similarities or differences in what participants were saying about their employment. The subsequent findings could then be analysed in light of the material found in the literature review and subsequently described and detailed in the findings and discussion chapters.

#### **6.4.12 Research stage 3**

This stage involved the undertaking of a survey of Agencies to assess the level and type of formal policies and practices concerning:

- current and anticipated future work-life balance provisions, including working arrangements;
- workforce planning relating to the age profile of Agency employees;
- management practices that support employee engagement;
- management practices that encourage employees to seek out assistance relating to work-life and ageing factors; and
- future indicators for sustaining workforce participation and activity.

The purpose of this research stage was to identify and examine the different types of policies, practices and approaches to workforce issues. This involved the gathering of information for current and future workforce requirements as well as to determine whether there were consistent and different approaches to workforce management activities. This stage also involved examining whether different managerial approaches or any Agency activity sought to address specific issues relating to attraction, engagement and retention.

One Agency elected to withdraw from the survey component because of changing work circumstances; therefore 13 Agencies participated by completing the survey questionnaire. The survey was sent to Human Resource Managers of the participating Agencies. Survey responses were collated and tallied so that a comparison across Agencies could be undertaken. Agencies were able to add additional information or details within each of the survey sections and in an open section at the end of the survey. Additional information could be provided to qualify any of the responses or to provide other information, including informal practices that were related to the topic or question areas. As noted by Neuman (2006), qualitative and quantitative research differs in many ways, but they also complement each other. In this stage of the research, the qualitative approach was needed to gather objective data and to be able to focus on similarities or differences across Agencies. The survey approach, as noted by Neuman (2006), is one in which the researcher does not manipulate a situation or condition, and as such the survey instrument did not need to respond to a scenario situation; nor did it contain other subjective items. The primary purpose of the survey was to gather information, and not to test a set hypothesis. The survey was exploratory in nature, aiming to gauge the level of Agency activity relating to contemporary

employment policies and practices (refer to appendix 13 for a copy of the survey instrument).

The survey was sent to Heads of Agencies (after initial approval to participate had been secured (as outlined the letter (2008) from the Director PSMO). The survey was sent by email in July 2009 to Agency HR Managers. Agencies were provided with an explanation of the research, and informed that the survey covered a range of employment factors including induction, policies for specific employment provisions including leave, strategies to address specific Agency requirements, flexible work arrangements, employee surveys and the identification of future challenges.

Agencies were also offered the ability to withdraw from participation in the research at any point. They were also invited to contact the researcher with any queries regarding the survey questions. All completed survey instruments were coded so that confidentiality was maintained.

#### **6.4.13 Agency survey data management and analysis**

The Agency responses were collated using an Excel spreadsheet, from which an examination of the responses could be made. Responses to the survey questions and open-field text information were entered and collated. The responses were examined in order to assess the level of agreement between employees' and managers' perceptions of HR practices and policies.

The responses to closed questions where yes/no answers were applicable were examined in terms of whether the Agencies had an HR policy or practices that related to the three themes of attraction, engagement and retention. The types or scope of policy and practice was considered as to whether they were compulsory, legislatively-driven policies or whether they were Agency-specific ones to address workforce needs or requirements. As not all fields were completed in the survey returns, and the Agencies did not advise their reasons for non-completion, the researcher decided to review corporate reports in order to assess each Agency's formal reporting of HR. This activity contributed to the examination of the survey responses by identifying additional activities that related to attraction, engagement and retention, and also assisted in analysing the survey responses about current and future concerns about attracting, engaging and retaining their workforce. Stage 3 of the research did not provide for subsequent interviews of Agency HR Managers and therefore the data could not be further validated.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter explained the research opportunity, the broad scope of the research, the approach taken and the methods employed regarding the recruitment of participants, the research method and data management during the research period. The research adopted a mixed-method approach in order to explore the factors concerning contemporary public sector workplaces.

The next chapter details the findings of the research concerning attraction, engagement and retention of employees across the different age groups. The chapter also details managers' perceptions and Agency responses across the three themes.



## **Chapter 7 Research findings**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter will detail the research findings and will be ordered into the three themes of attraction, engagement and retention that were explored in the literature. This allows for the identification of differences and similarities within and across the themes. Employees' perspectives and expectations are detailed in the first section.

The second section within each theme details managers' perspectives and expectations, including where there appears to be agreement and disagreement with the employee perspective about each theme. The managers' views about the application, management and uptake of related policies and practices are also provided.

The third section within each theme details Agency survey data, and provides for the Agency policies and practices that relate to managers' and employees' expectations regarding their employment and whether or not these policies and practices are aligned.

The fourth section provides an examination of two key factors affecting contemporary employment and human resource management: work-life balance needs and a workforce comprising different generations. Having four generations in the workforce has changed workplace arrangements, and the participants' views were sought in order to understand whether or not they perceived any generational differences. These two factors are important for understanding how workplaces need to arrange current and future employment conditions and provisions. Table 6 sets out the layout of this chapter.

**Table 6: – arrangement of chapter**

<b>Chapter layout</b>	
<b>Section 1</b>	Employees
<b>Attraction</b>	Managers
<b>Attraction to engagement</b>	Agencies
<b>Section 2</b>	Employees
<b>Engagement</b>	Managers
	Agencies
<b>Section 3</b>	Employees
<b>Retention</b>	Managers
	Agencies
<b>Section 4</b>	Employees
<b>Work-life balance</b>	Managers
<b>Inter-generational workforces</b>	Agencies
<b>Work-life balance</b>	
<b>Generational and inter-generational workforces</b>	
<b>Chapter Conclusion</b>	

## 7.2 Attraction

### 7.2.1 Employee perceptions about attraction

This section presents the research findings regarding the key factors that attracted people to work in the TSS, which was the first question asked of participants. Responses to this question showed that regardless of whether participants had recently joined or had been long-term employees of the TSS, there were a number of similarities in their responses.

Participants indicated that the primary attractor was job security. Having interesting work and work that benefited society or community was a strong attractor for participants. The next strongest response was having what employees perceived as attractive conditions of employment: annual leave entitlements, hours and days of work, flexible working arrangements and personal (carers, sick) leave. Participants who had worked in the private sector commented that there was always pressure in the private sector to work additional (unpaid) hours and performance demands were always a source of stress, whereas in the public sector they foresaw a steady work pace with guaranteed entitlements that wouldn't be taken from them.

E7 (a 50-year-old male, permanent employee with 20 years of service) had applied to work in the TSS just after finishing school and thought the service would be a good

place to start, but job security was the main reason, meaning a steady job with steady income and the opportunity to look at other positions. E16 (a female, 30 years of age, part-time employee) was attracted to apply not because the position matched her experience gained in other employment, but because there was permanency and solid employment conditions.

Younger employees saw job security as an attractor, but from a different perspective. The parents of one participant (E17, a female, 20 years of age, with two years of service) are employed in the TSS and she was therefore aware that the service was flexible, which was a key attractor for her. This appealed to her as she could alter her work pattern and undertake university studies at the same time as working, therefore having an income and work experience related to her sphere of study. E6 (a 38-year-old male), having worked for 15 years in the private sector, wanted job security where the nature and hours of work would mean a better work-life balance and on-call work was not required. E13 (a 48-year-old part-time male) previously experienced a lack of job security even though the work was interesting and challenging in the private sector; and was attracted to the TSS because he wanted more routine, less hectic hours, a steady income, and secure employment and the ability to have family time.

Several participants entered the TSS on traineeships, cadetships or graduate programs and were attracted to the benefits of further training and being able to gain qualifications or graduate work experience in a secure job environment. The notion of job security for participants aged over 40 years was related to having steady employment, and younger employees also identified this as being an important attraction factor. Younger employees' perception of job security also extended to being able to have periods of non-active employment, either paid or unpaid, in order to travel, to work elsewhere or to take time away for family or personal wellbeing. This meant that job security included being able to leave the service for a period of time (usually indicated by participants as at least one and up to five years leave, followed by returning to the TSS). When asked if they anticipated returning to the same position after such leave, most participants indicated that this was probably so, but that at the time they expected the opportunity to consider other positions as well.

More than half the participants had family members or relatives already working in the TSS when they first considered applying; therefore, they had some knowledge about the terms and conditions of employment. Approximately one third of participants had relocated to Tasmania from interstate to secure steady employment or employment related to their qualifications, skills and knowledge. Four participants (in the 30 to 45

year age group) consciously decided to apply because of flexible work arrangements that would provide them with the ability for better work-life balance. Two participants (one under 45 years of age and one under 30 years of age) had applied for their positions because they were electing to downshift.

M9 (a 51-year-old male) stated that the attraction to apply for a TSS position was that it provided the opportunity to gain a qualification as a cadet and that career advancement was possible. He saw this as job security, that he *'...would be set for life, it was working and being supported by the government. That was the big attractor'*. M9's chosen occupation meant that he would be able to access a number of different positions or promotions across Agencies rather than being tied to one position forever, and he would be able to make a worthwhile difference. This was also noted by six other participants (all over 40 years of age) who foresaw that working in the TSS would be a positive experience that provided an opportunity to serve the community. Participants who had been in the TSS for over 20 years recalled that when they initially applied to join the TSS they saw it as an employment opportunity, given a tight labour market at that time, with those who held tertiary qualifications believed that the TSS was a better option than working elsewhere or outside their areas of expertise.

Other attractors commonly identified were the reputation of the Agency worked in (rather than the TSS *per se*), career advancement, perceived mobility and a positive level of remuneration. This last factor was seen as more advantageous by those coming from the private sector, whereas those applying from other public organisations or state-owned companies did not perceive remuneration to be a critical factor. Three participants who had entered the TSS as graduates or cadets held that their public sector experience would benefit their study and that the remuneration was higher than expected. This group expected to experience a range of different activities and tasks whilst being supported in their studies.

Two participants held that work location was a key attractor. One Agency located away from the larger cities attracted both local and non-local people because of the locality, which was commented on by all participants employed by this particular Agency. For others, the location of the work was important in that they would not have to relocate or travel great distances. Tertiary-qualified participants were attracted by being able to apply their qualifications to interesting work. Location and work relevant to qualifications were indicated by participants across each of the age groups.

In summary, there are factors that inform prospective employees' views and expectations relating to attraction. Salary, job security, terms and conditions of

employment, career or skills development, working to contribute to community or society, working relationships and flexibility were the main attractors noted. Age responses about attraction were fairly uniform; and where age-related differences were noted they were in relation to the meaning of factors such as job security, which was perceived differently by people under the age of 30 years as detailed.

### **7.2.2 Manager perceptions about attraction**

On the whole, managers' responses regarding attraction matched with those of their employees, that is, having an interesting job, good pay, good people to work with and opportunities for development and career progression. Managers accepted that this differed for some people but that, on the whole, people want to work somewhere that offers a level of security. All managers confirmed the need to be able to provide interesting work, career development opportunities and flexible working arrangements, and to manage fairly, as key factors to attract the right people. Six managers noted that attracting suitably qualified and experienced applicants for specialised jobs was at times difficult and that the public sector, with its recruitment time lags and terms and conditions of employment that do not always align with the private sector, may deter some people from applying.

*We need to present the organisation as an attractive place in which people want to work, and to do that we need to strongly support training and development. This includes leadership and middle managers developing people-management skills so that people can evolve within the job and lead good team (M3, a 48-year-old female, manager of 14 people).*

The reputation of the organisation was seen an attractor, and four managers acknowledged that applicants had commented that they were influenced by what they had heard from others about the Agency in which they applied to work. Also noted was the type and range of work being offered. M5 (a 50-year-old female, manager of 4 employees) commented that '*...it was the position's occupational focus that attracted some people...*'.

Managers acknowledged that people are aware of others working well in the TSS and may find this to be an attractor. However, managers were also able to identify a number of limitations that may detract potential applicants. This involved the inability to quickly recruit someone and that potential applicants may be deterred in hearing other people's experiences of perceived time delays between advertisement and selection.

A key aspect noted by the managers was that in order to attract the right people they need to be able to actively manage employees' needs for flexible work arrangements

and provide interesting and challenging work. This finding indicates an understanding and awareness by managers of having the right attraction measures and selection processes by which the organisation can attract the right calibre of employees.

### **7.2.3 Agency and attraction**

The question of attraction appears to be considered by most of the Agencies surveyed as a critical component to their ongoing sustainability. Responses to the survey questions reveal that attracting the right applicants has become an area that has required Agencies to consider changing their recruitment and advertising activities. It is noted that legislation requires the TSS to advertise its vacancies in the government gazette, and the TSS is resource-limited in using other media such as newspapers, career prospectuses or journal advertising. The research found that primarily, only senior or highly specialised vacancies or specific agency recruitment programs were advertised more widely.

Six Agencies indicated that they were currently undertaking specific recruitment activities, which took the form of meeting hard-to-fill vacancies for certain occupational groups and attracting graduates. Agencies have also sought to enhance their ability to attract suitable applicants through the offer of training and development, and in hard-to-fill specialised occupations additional remuneration has been offered. However, this requires financial resources and is therefore limited.

A number of Agencies have recruitment or attraction information on their websites, promoting the organisation and providing information about the terms and conditions of employment. The survey found that Agencies have started to participate in a whole-of-service on-boarding/exit survey tool by which they hoped to gain a better understanding of what attracts employees. However, this tool does not capture all applicants but only those successful in gaining positions, therefore it doesn't serve to identify non-successful applicants' reasons for applying or what attracted them to apply in the first instance.

One Agency indicated that its current recruitment strategy is aimed at meeting the need for fixed-term employees because of high workload demands. This supported a number of managers' views regarding high workload levels and increasing employee stress levels. The survey asked Agencies what they believed were the most important future challenges to recruiting the right people, and most identified that attraction and the recruitment processes are important and are of concern. Table 7 details the Agency responses about current recruitment challenges.

**Table 7: Responses to recruitment themes**

Themes	Agency responses
Recruitment in general	42% of Agencies indicated this as important
Recruiting suitably experienced/skilled people	71% Agencies indicated this as important
Recruiting professionals - specific occupations	36% Agencies indicated this as important

The survey responses demonstrate that recruitment is of concern for Agencies, and includes the ability of Agencies to position their recruitment practices to meet current and future challenges. One Agency indicated that it is restricted in being able to respond to critical skills shortages because of the legislative framework in which it operates, and any additional resources allocated to attraction activities is at a cost to another area.

One Agency noted that whilst its organisation was comparatively small, it offered cadetships and graduate programs and was noted for its career opportunities. Agencies also indicated that they are aware of labour market and ageing workforce factors that will impinge on attraction to public sector jobs, and will need to continue to attract suitable applicants for successful recruitment.

The legislative framework and relevant guidelines provide specific recruitment procedures, and are designed to ensure that fairness, equity and merit are observed. Agencies are aware that they operate in a competitive labour market and that there will be ongoing challenges to attracting suitable applicants. Potential applicants are provided with information about vacancies that are placed in the gazette. This information extends to the Statement of Duties, which includes roles, responsibilities, working environment and, at times, information about the Agency. There is also a whole-of-government approach to promoting the TSS as an opportunity to gain experience across a wide range of occupational areas, which is also promoted at careers fairs. Three Agencies indicated that they also participate at careers fairs or other venues, including agricultural field days, to promote their organisations and therefore attract potential employees.

The ability of Agencies to improve organisational capability and responsiveness to organisational demands is hampered at times by the legislative framework and HR's capability and capacity to position their employment strategies using finite resources.

#### 7.2.4 Attraction—summary

In summary, across the theme of attraction there was a fairly consistent response from employee participants that the key attractors were: job security, interesting work that contributed to society or community, having challenging and varied work tasks, having good managers and a team environment; as well as flexible work arrangements. These factors were not identified by any one particular age group, gender or classification level. People in the senior executive service down to those at the lower clerical and administrative or operational levels all identified similar factors.

Managers were not only able to describe their own perceptions about attraction but had a good awareness and understanding of employees' views. There were minimal differences (as noted) in the responses provided when considering the three age groups selected for this research. Participants aged under 30 years of age, aged 30 to 45 and over 45 years of age provided similar responses but it would appear that those under 30 years of age held different expectations regarding job security, not as an attractor *per se*, but the notion of job security for this age group was one where there wasn't an expectation that they would stay in employment for several years. For this age group job security meant having periods away from the organisation in order to pursue other interests and then be able to return to the organisation. Managers indicated that they were aware of the different expectations that the different generations had regarding job security.

Agency survey responses did not match the above factors to a great extent, but there was an awareness of the importance of projecting TSS employment as a rewarding and challenging experience. Agencies stated their concerns about being able to attract the 'right' applicants in order to meet current or predicted skills shortages, and apart from being able to provide additional remuneration in some cases, Agencies were not able to identify the same key attractors as employees or managers. Some Agencies have only recently commenced undertaking on-boarding surveys in order to gain a better understanding of attraction (and engagement and retention factors). Whether this will translate into having the right terms and conditions to attract the 'right' applicant remains to be seen.

What is noted, however, is that Agencies held that limited resources impact on their ability to promote their organisations as good places to work and therefore they have not engaged in better understanding attraction factors. Additionally, Agencies have, through their HR policies and practices, primarily focused on compliance with legislation rather than proactive recruitment activities. The evidence generated by the



research appears to indicate an SHRM top-down approach to attraction and recruitment based on legislative or direction guidelines. This approach does not appear to take information from the bottom up to inform what is required in terms of attracting the 'right' applicants in a tight and competitive labour market.

### **7.2.5 Attraction to engagement—employee expectations and realities**

Prior to considering the findings concerning engagement and retention, it is worthwhile to describe participants' perceptions about what attracted them to join the TSS and whether these expectations were actually met and therefore contributed to their engagement levels.

The expectations of E1 (a 35-year-old female, part-time employee) concerned the number of hours and days worked, as well as in having an enjoyable range of tasks and working with helpful and friendly people and these expectations were met. For E2 (a 53-year-old male) the remuneration '*...was more than what I expected, the work is interesting and it is a good place to work*'. Other participants had noted that the ability to work part-time and to access training and development had exceeded their initial expectations. E19 (a 19-year-old male) found his expectations exceeded in that he had a fixed-term position that also provided challenging work with autonomy and the opportunity to gain more skills. All graduate or cadet-entry participants recalled being surprised at the level of support from their managers and co-workers, that people were friendly and that their areas of study or qualifications were relevant to their work. One participant commented that he didn't know what to expect when he first started, but found opportunities to undertake a wide range of tasks, thereby exceeding his expectations.

However, one participant in a senior role found the position difficult at the outset as two out of three people in his section had left at the same time: '*...it was difficult to settle quickly into the role and the senior manager didn't have an adequate understanding of the position or of the section*' (M2, a 54-year-old male). One senior manager commented that initially the level of support was positive, but as her seniority increased the level of support reduced and was more focused on achieving outcomes. Therefore, her expectations weren't met, but she acknowledged that this occurred in periods of rapid change (M3, a 48-year-old female, part-time employee).

Several participants stated that the job description and the work involved was a good match, but that the workload had been high since they commenced. Two participants (one under 45 years and one under 30 years of age) had applied for their positions

because they were electing to downshift. The choice to move to a lower classification was made in order to gain a better work-life balance (one as part of a plan leading up to retirement and one because of having young children). Both participants believed that their work value was higher than provided for in the Statements of Duties, and they were expected to work inflexible hours.

E8 (a 19-year-old female cadet) had heard things about working in the public sector when growing up: *'I think some people have certain preconceived ideas about it, but it wasn't what I expected at all. People were friendly and they talked to you, no one was stuffy or nerdy'*. For E8 *'...there was one surprise in that people are always willing to help you, they couldn't do enough to make my days enjoyable and worthwhile: they even looked at rotating me through different sections and I thought I would just get the menial tasks'*. One graduate's expectations weren't very concrete but as time went by the work became more interesting and more related to what had been done at university, so it had been positive.

Participants' expectations appear to have been met in the majority of cases. There appeared to be a better match for people who joined over 10 years ago than those who had more recently commenced. The differences were related to their varying perceptions of the knowledge they had of the positions and of the terms and conditions of employment.

Twenty-two participants indicated that their Statements of Duties realistically matched their duties. E6 (a 38-year-old male with three years' service) was surprised that the Statement of Duties accurately reflected the duties and that the position was broad and worked at the different levels described. E14 (a 32-year-old male) indicated that his Statement of Duties was fairly accurate, but only in a generic sense, with the technical expertise required fairly well stated but the range and breadth of stakeholders relating to the position understated. M8 (a 40-year-old male) noted in talking about his own experience that whilst the Statement of Duties reflected the roles and responsibilities of the position, there are always a number of unexpected things to be done that are outside the competencies outlined in the statement. M5 (a 50-year-old female) believed that the Statement of Duties did not adequately detail the full range of management tasks involved.

Seven participants identified that their positions had changed over time, with increased responsibilities, workloads or technological and service delivery changes. Four participants believed that the Statement of Duties under-represented the level of responsibility and the duties assigned to the position or that they were misaligned to

the section's activities. M7 (a 48-year-old female) stated that her Statement of Duties did not accurately match the expectations of the position in that:

*It is because of the nature of the work we do. We are required to be very responsive to the changing dynamics and the requirements of the job and we have to do anything at any time basically. So whilst we know a general level of expectation of what is required of the job, it is important to know the framework in which to operate; it is that having a political nous in terms of managing what it is you are doing.*

In summary, the participants indicated that their expectations about the work and employment conditions were fairly close to reality, and their comments covered their remuneration, flexible working arrangements, interesting work, that their work colleagues exceeded their expectations in terms of being supportive and helpful and that the range of tasks and duties they were given were challenging and enjoyable but not restrictive. This highlights the complexity, at times, of public sector positions and the environment in which these positions operate. The match between a Statement of Duties and an actual position is difficult to measure in terms of its formal alignment or fit, but it does offer the opportunity to consider how employees view their work, their roles and responsibilities. The findings and the excerpts from participants provided in this section highlight that there were no findings to be drawn based on the age of participants. The results were consistent; in that participants reported their employment met their expectations but differences between responses highlight the importance of understanding individuals' views about how their commencement in employment and how this then contributes to or translates to engagement and retention.

#### **7.2.6 Managers—attraction to engagement**

Managers did appear to have insight into their employees' expectations, both in terms of attraction and how these were met, but were also shaped by their own experiences. The questions of and responses relating to the duties prescribed and those undertaken appeared to be relatively similar for most participants, as acknowledged by managers. Five managers believed they undertook to ensure that new employees were welcomed and supported, and that this was essential for establishing engagement and performance. This appears to be undertaken outside the formal induction and orientation practices and is based on the personal views of managers about the extent and duration of these activities.

Four managers believed that new employees should be, and are, supported by management and by the organisation and co-workers, and held that there will always be some degree of misalignment between employees' expectations and the reality.

However, these managers did not envisage many exceptions to the two being well matched. Managers believed that they and the organisation needed to ensure a smooth transition from recruitment to engagement to ensure employees' engagement levels are sustained at a high and consistent level. For managers, employee's age was not a factor when considering how an employee is welcomed into the workplace.

### **7.2.7 Agencies—attraction to engagement**

Agencies were beginning to identify the links between attraction and engagement through the use of on-boarding (commencement and early employment) surveys, and they also supported orientation and induction activities. Agencies were asked whether new employees were provided with information about their terms and conditions of employment. All responded in the affirmative, but provided the information in different ways. One indicated that it was in a letter of offer and seven indicated that it was provided electronically or through an orientation or induction session. Two indicated that employees were advised about their terms and conditions of employment through the induction or orientation process. All Agencies indicated that they use their Intranets to inform all employees about their terms and conditions of employment.

Links were also noted between recruitment programs and formal welcoming or induction programs as a means of meeting employees' expectations, and several Agencies have started to implement ways to measure effectiveness of this through probation interviews or survey tools.

## **7.3 Engagement**

The research sought to identify the engagement factors for employees. The researcher invited participants to comment on and discuss the elements that provided them with satisfaction, including employment provisions such as flexible work, enjoyment of work tasks, work environment factors, leave provisions, training and workload levels. The researcher explained that engagement meant that employees were motivated about their work and their ability to access a range of provisions; and that they derived enjoyment or satisfaction from their work. Participants were invited to comment on these or other factors in terms of what they liked about their jobs. It is noted, therefore, that several factors overlap across the two themes of engagement and retention. The next section details the findings of the different components of engagement including: job satisfaction, recognition and reward provisions, workload levels, managers and team members, salary and leave and flexible work arrangements.

### 7.3.1 Employees

#### 7.3.1.1 Engagement—job satisfaction

There were some consistent responses about what participants liked about their jobs related to job security, working with people (co-workers and customers), being busy and achieving a sense of fulfilment in their roles. E1 (a 35-year-old female) noted the location and the beauty of the environment, along with co-workers and the ability to move into different roles, as major contributors to job satisfaction. E2 (a 53-year-old male with over 30 years of service), believed that work gave him identification outside his private life, along with being able to see other people develop and gain skills, which contributed to his job satisfaction levels. E2 saw that job satisfaction was where work was more than merely the exchange of money for labour.

The majority of participants identified doing something worthwhile that helped the community, working with good people, learning new skills and having pride in their work, as major contributors to engagement. E6 (a 38-year-old male with 2 years of service) explained:

*... that it is my interactions with others to start with, the challenges on a day-to-day basis, and just having the opportunity to have a really good view of how the whole department and how government works together. It is probably one of the best positions.*

Some of the other common elements mentioned were having a supportive work environment, having interesting and changing duties and having a mix of routine and non-routine tasks. Two participants identified the ability to come into a new role, be it policy or service delivery, and to be able to enhance and progress the section's activities to achieve good outcomes for the unit and for individuals, as strong contributors to engagement.

The literature review identified that the ability to be creative and innovative at work contributes to employees' levels of job satisfaction. For example, E17 (a 20-year-old female) and E7 (a 50-year-old male) stated that while procedures must be followed, there is always the ability to make suggestions to improve the way in which things are done. In this respect the ability to be creative or innovative was present, but was not a contributor to job satisfaction. E7 found fulfilment in using initiative when delegating so that there was job rotation and skills development, which contributed to job satisfaction.

E3 (a 25-year-old female) and E5 (a 65-year-old female with eight years of service) stated that they are able to be creative and innovative, and saw this as an important aspect of job satisfaction. Six participants talked about their ability to be creative and

innovative, but did not elaborate on this to any extent; nor did they indicate that it contributed to work satisfaction. To M4 (a 56-year-old male), the ability to be creative and innovative was important, and having good working relationships was a strong contributor. M3 (a 48-year-old female) said that whilst being creative and innovative contributes to job satisfaction and engagement levels at times, it was not a constant contributor.

All participants identified that having interesting work was important to their levels of engagement. However, the concept of what constitutes interesting work varied, in some cases relating directly to the position held and individuals' qualifications, skills and work experience. For E2 (a 53-year-old male with twelve years of service), interesting work meant not doing the same thing every day, helping others and working in a beautiful location. E11 (a 65-year-old male), a senior professional, saw contract supervision or construction work as more enjoyable than her own, as this related to activities leading to a sense of accomplishment and being able to say '*I did that*'. Interesting work meant challenging work, and this was rated the highest on the list of factors contributing to job satisfaction and engagement (E3, a 25-year-old female and E9, a 51-year-old female). E21 (a 41-year-old female with 15 years of service) held that interesting work is doing work that is challenging and assists the team in getting the work done, and working with good people was a bonus; all of which contributed to her job satisfaction and levels of engagement.

For some, interesting work involved doing different work tasks rather than the same tasks each day; for others it was how, where and with whom the work is undertaken. Interesting work was valued by all participants as a primary contributor to engagement, and many participants indicated that their work contributes positively to the community, which was a major engagement factor for them. E1 (a 35-year-old female part-time employee) believed that there isn't anything else that would contribute to the current engagement levels and that she has no desire to go elsewhere to expand her horizons: she is just happy in the job. For another, '*Doing the work gives me pride, which is my job satisfaction, and having challenging work that is fulfilling ... it is solely about me as opposed to my role within my family unit*' (M3, a 48-year-old female).

Other key factors contributing to engagement, as noted by E8 (a 19-year-old part-time cadet), are the organisation itself and the opportunity to make a difference. M6 (a 55-year-old female) identified the advantages provided by the position and the challenge in meeting ongoing demands as being key criteria for engagement. The ability to work and have a good work-life balance are key factors for good engagement (M7, a 48-

year-old female). For M4 (a 56-year-old male with over twenty years of service), it meant producing results, working with people, assisting in staff development and seeing staff get job satisfaction from what they're doing. M4 stated:

*I obtain great job satisfaction in undertaking project work. I like to be busy and it is incredibly busy. I like a challenge and I suppose on a personal level I like to overcome challenges, so there is no shortage of that.*

It is evident from the excerpts provided in this section and from the analysis of participants' views about engagement and job satisfaction that there are several common factors that are pertinent and that were found across all age groups. As with attraction, having interesting and challenging work, making a difference or worthwhile contribution, attaining a good work-life balance and feelings of self-worth or value were found across all age groups.

### **7.3.1.2 Engagement—recognition and reward**

Mixed responses were received to the question 'whether receiving recognition for work done was an important contributor to job satisfaction'. More than one-third of participants indicated that they didn't receive regular feedback or recognition for their work. However, participants aged over 45 years reported a lack of formal feedback but noted that they did receive informal recognition. Three participants believed that receiving feedback is important to their levels of job satisfaction; six participants held that it was moderately important and the remainder did not indicate whether recognition or regular feedback was a contributor. One manager (M4, a 56-year-old male) stated that the lack of regular feedback or recognition detracted from his current job satisfaction. E18 (a 23-year-old female graduate with one year of service) stated:

*... that not only as an individual was there recognition, but I have heard of others getting rewarded for her efforts and that encourages you to perform better and you know that you've actually contributed to the organisation.*

E5 (a 65-year-old female part-time employee) commented that recognition for effort was non-existent and saw the level of work as being equally important to other positions where recognition was given. E8 (a 19-year-old female cadet with 18 months service) believed that feeling valued and acknowledged for one's work is a major contributor to engagement:

*I think that is a big thing for me. I got an email from the Director the other day saying what a great job I had done and I was impressed...*

M8 (a 40-year-old male with 14 years of service) believed that being recognised for effort partly contributes to job satisfaction, ...*'but it is more setting your own targets, doing a good job and obtaining a level of achievement at the individual level, that is*

*more important*'. For M1 (a 44-year-old female) work was recognised in the early stages '*...but ongoing recognition isn't as strong because it isn't necessary to be continually recognised or rewarded for the work you do*'. M7 (a 48-year-old female) didn't believe that recognition contributes to job satisfaction, as the work is done behind the scenes in helping people across the Agency and at the end of the day there is very little tangible evidence.

Recognition for effort appears to be strongly valued by some employees, but didn't correspond with age, gender, Agency or job level classification. Participants aged less than 45 years indicated that formal feedback did not directly affect their levels of job satisfaction; it was more how they felt about the job they did. For participants aged over 45 years there was more of an indication that formal feedback was not a factor for job satisfaction, whereas for participants aged under 30 years receiving formal and informal feedback was important to their levels of job satisfaction, as noted by E17.

#### **7.3.1.3 Engagement—training, development and career pathways**

Seventeen participants provided information regarding opportunities to access training and development activities and career pathways and discussed whether these aspects were important to their levels of engagement. The participants said that for them engagement was being happy in their work, that the work was challenging and they were supported and felt that they were contributing to something worthwhile. Three indicated that they had not been provided with adequate training or career development opportunities. Three managers recently participated in leadership training and believed that this was an investment that benefits the organisation. E6 (a 38-year-old male part-time employee), having completed a management program, commented how several key aspects of the program provided better technical and management skills and knowledge. Ten participants indicated that they had received adequate training in order to undertake their duties, and some training and development opportunities were linked to career pathways.

E21 (a 41-year-old female), who was undertaking tertiary study, did not feel supported by the Agency and believed that this lack of support was detrimental to job satisfaction. Younger participants (four people under the age of 30 years) expected that training, development and career opportunities would be part of their employment and said their Agencies encouraged them to pursue career options, but on the whole it wasn't the strongest contributor to their levels of engagement. Participants aged over 30 years indicated that they held mixed views about how training and development contributed



to their levels of engagement. For these participants, engagement was derived in other areas such as doing a good job or having challenging work.

Two participants believed their employment would provide automatic career pathways but did not see this as contributing to their engagement. Cadets and graduate participants (4) held that their programs, whilst not necessarily leading to permanent employment, would contribute to longer-term career development. It would appear that the question of training and development and career pathways may contribute to engagement, but are not major or consistently-identified factors.

#### **7.3.1.4 Engagement—workload levels**

The question of the importance of workload levels to job satisfaction was discussed and nine participants chose to comment. E6 stated that *'...workload levels are good: it is a busy office without being overwhelmingly or ridiculously busy. There are peaks and troughs and times when workloads become a little too light'*. E6 commented that with recent staff reductions there were still quiet times and that it is a matter of stepping up and doing what needs to be done to meet targets in busy times, knowing that it will settle again. Therefore, E6 does not find high workload levels as a detractor to her engagement levels.

However, E9 (a 51-year-old female policy manager) stated that the workload levels had always been high, that there is always more than she can do and that she never had a time when she wasn't busy. E9's satisfaction was gained from managing her workload by prioritising what things need to be done. E8 (a 19-year-old female cadet), considered a steady workload good: as the team is working 'flat out' most of the time, the work is shared and it is easier to handle high workloads when team members pull their weight.

M2 (a 54-year-old male senior executive) accepted that workloads are high and this is part of the responsibility of the position, whereas M6 (a 55-year-old female) saw the workload as overwhelming, with a negative impact on job satisfaction. M9 (a 51-year-old male) noted that the workload peaks at certain times of the year and requires people to work solidly through this period, at times needing to work overtime, but that once targets are met there is flexibility to take time off, which contributes both to personal and team job satisfaction and engagement. M7 (a 48-year-old female with 11 years of service) leads a small work team of four people, and stated that:

*There is a heavy workload and it is fairly steady, but I like that because it is challenging and whilst at times I would like a drop in workload, there is a good*

*level of job satisfaction gained from balancing the workload and achieving results.*

There was no identified consensus across any of the age groups that their workloads were not manageable; indeed there was more agreement that there were heavy workloads at times but that a team approach means that the workload doesn't become overwhelming. From the excerpts provided in this section it can be concluded that the participants accept periods of higher workload and also acknowledge how reciprocal arrangements are in place to provide flexibility especially in low workload periods.

#### **7.3.1.5 Engagement—good managers, relationships and management practices**

Participants were asked whether having good managers contributed to their levels of engagement. Some indicated that good managers are important, and a number of participants added to this by identifying what they believed constituted a good manager. E7 (a 50-year-old male with 20 years of service) noted the importance of having a good, technically 'savvy' manager, but when the manager lacked the skills to make the work environment effective, the whole team would be affected. E5 (a 65-year-old female part-time employee) stated it is important to have a good manager and accepted that this isn't always possible; she is finding it more difficult to have a good working relationship with her manager. E9 (a 51-year-old female with 27 years of service) indicated that having a good manager is important, but is not the most important thing: having a smart, intelligent manager might be good but doesn't necessarily provide someone with whom she can establish a good working relationship. A manager needs to manage well, treat people fairly and guide the team (E9). E15 (a 30-year-old female project officer) held that there is always room for improvement and that the differences in leadership styles and culture impact on employee engagement.

Two participants who indicated the importance of good managers said that they currently have managers who do not communicate very well and who fail to make decisions during challenging times, which detracts from their level of engagement. Six managers indicated they themselves had good managers and leaders who were willing to help and give advice or support when needed. The role or style of management, including leadership and interaction with individuals and the workgroup, appeared to vary across participants' responses.

E13 (a 48-year-old male with 15 years of service) held that leadership involves giving employees opportunities, championing innovation and supporting middle-level

managers to strive for better outcomes and improved employee morale. E9 (a 51-year-old female) and E8 (a 19-year-old female cadet) also commented on the importance of having leadership or direction, but acknowledged that there was a level of cynicism relating to good leadership, given the culture of their particular Agency. Twenty-four participants agreed with the notion that engagement is increased or attained by having good working relationships. E16 (a 35-year-old female part-time employee) noted that:

*...like anywhere, it is dynamic and you get some people that are harder to work with and I'm now at this stage in my life where things like that don't worry me. It is what it is: people aren't perfect and we all have up and down days.*

E2 (a 53-year-old male) stated that his working relationships with co-workers varied and were affected by the organisation's culture. The question of organisational culture is important for E2, who stated that more recently the culture had become more positive and made him feel more engaged and connected to what the organisation was trying to achieve. E5 (a 65-year-old female) said:

*I take pride in having good working relationships, even with people I don't feel a natural affinity with; at times you meet someone with whom you can't have a good working relationship. I don't see this shortcoming of myself, but I try to maintain a professional working relationship.*

*'It has been very important in my work to have a close and friendly relationship with my manager and co-workers, along with the need to cultivate relationships with stakeholders and clients'* (E11, a 65-year-old male with 14 years of service, professional employee). Participants identified that having good working relationships is important for most people, but it is the nature of the relationships and the perceived benefits and exchanges between co-workers, either as employee to manager or co-worker to co-worker, that varies and impacts on the contribution of good working relationships to engagement levels. The findings indicate a general understanding of the importance of having good managers and leaders and how this impacts on individuals' engagement levels. The need for, and benefit of, good teams at work is also identified, but the meaning of 'good team' appears to vary when the factor of age is introduced. Younger participants saw teamwork as sharing the workload and having guidance from older employees; older employees held that the sharing of work was important too, but it was also seeing younger employees gain skills and knowledge and sharing information to achieve good outcomes and solving problems at the group level that contributed to their own, other team members' and the managers' level of engagement and job satisfaction.

The question of how people-management practices affected participants' job satisfaction elicited mixed responses. This variation may be partly attributable to how individuals understood what 'sound people-management' practices are, how they were applied or how they directly affected participants. For E9 (a 51-year-old female), the day-to-day hands-on management of people contributed to job satisfaction as much as formal HR practices and policies. Five participants agreed that their organisations had sound people-management practices, but that consistency of responses varied greatly between individuals and managers.

For a number of participants, good people-management practices did not mean the combination of practices and policies or their application in the workplace. These participants understood that the employment contract included remuneration, provisions for leave, training and development and flexible work arrangements as some components, but some participants held that beyond the contractual arrangements there were also a number of aspects that were involved in an organisation's people-management practices, including their managers' style or approach, the communication style or level of information from the senior executive, the culture of the organisation and the values held by the organisation. For the majority of the participants, good people-management practices were important, meaning that they were managed fairly, but there was little evidence of how good people-management practices contributed directly to engagement levels.

#### **7.3.1.7 Engagement—salary**

Participants were asked whether or not the salary they received was an engagement factor. Two participants indicated that salary was not a key contributor and three indicated that it wasn't an incentive to stay in the service. These participants considered having the opportunity to use their qualifications, skills and experience in a job that is challenging and suited to their abilities to be more important than salary. Two participants who had chosen to downshift (in classification level) stated that salary wasn't an important contributor to their levels of engagement.

Other participants indicated that their salaries provided a measure of job satisfaction, but were not the most important factor. Participants who had recently started in the service indicated that receiving their salaries was a rewarding experience; however, additional benefits such as training and development were stronger factors.

A number of participants drew on their knowledge and perception of salary differences between the private and public sector. E16 (a 35-year-old female with six years of

service) noted that the salary was less than in the private sector, and a number of different occupational groups received more money in the private sector. This is countered by E19 (a 19-year-old male cadet), who commented that the pay is always good in the state government. It would appear that there are different perceptions and understandings relating to salaries and therefore how they translate to or affect job satisfaction levels. Most participants were aware of the need to have salaries commensurate with the skills and knowledge required for the positions held. Salary appeared to be an important factor to some degree, but it wasn't the strongest driver for high levels of engagement for participants.

#### **7.3.1.8 Engagement—leave entitlements and flexible work arrangements**

The researcher asked participants whether their leave entitlements and flexible work arrangements contributed to their levels of job satisfaction or levels of engagement. The majority of participants had not accessed extended periods of leave; however, 15 participants indicated an awareness of, and satisfaction with, their leave entitlements. For E14 (a 32-year-old male technical officer), the ability to take a range of leave entitlements contributed greatly to job satisfaction. M6 (a 55-year-old female) stated:

*... it is an age thing; earlier in my career I didn't keep track of what leave I was entitled to. However, I am now aware of this and use leave to care for family, but it is good to know that there is leave I can access in case of ill health.*

This greatly contributed to M6's engagement levels. However, other responses indicated general satisfaction with leave entitlements and arrangements but that it does not contribute significantly to engagement levels. This may be because leave is able to be taken when employees require it or it isn't recognised by most participants as an engagement factor.

Twenty-four participants chose to comment on their ability to access flexible work arrangements and how this contributed to their levels of engagement. Flexible work arrangements appear to be a strong contributor to good morale. The ability to alter normal patterns of work hours to meet *ad hoc* or occasional personal needs or formal or long-term arrangements emerged as a key contributor to job satisfaction. E18 (a 23-year-old female graduate) described being able to take three hours off in one week and work three hours more in the following week in order to meet personal requirements as an incentive.

E11 (a 65-year-old male part-time employee) believed that flexibility, in combination with other factors such as good working relationships, provides the incentive and

encouragement to keep trying his best. E13 (a 48-year-old male part-time employee) commented that flexible work arrangements contribute to performance levels and hence engagement because these arrangements allow time off to spend with family when it suits both the Agency and the individual. *'It is a deal breaker'*, according to E14 (a 32-year-old male technical officer), and it is a positive contributor: *'...as long as someone is doing the job and you can measure when somebody is doing that job because the work is done, then this is more important than how many hours they're actually at work'*.

For E19 (a 19-year-old male cadet), there is limited flexibility because of the requirement to be at the workplace during set hours. E8 (a female cadet) believed that *'the flexibility offered would assist with attending university and when I have children I will be able to come back part-time'*. One participant indicated that workload levels increase at certain times of the year and flexible arrangements are limited, but there is flexibility at other times without formal approval being required.

M1 (a 44-year-old female with six months of service) and M5 (a 50-year-old female with two and a half years of service) commented that there are times when the workloads are such that they take work home, but acknowledged there is reciprocity in being able to work from home on days when there is a personal need. Five participants also indicated that they can start late or go home early without a formal application and that they work the hours required to get the job done rather than the standard core hours. For M3 (a 48-year-old female with over 25 years of service), flexible work arrangements are very important:

*It is very important. I am lucky in that I've always had managers who have been flexible. I certainly work more hours than I need to, but I get the reward in that if I need to be away for something I can be and I can work from home if I have to.*

All participants indicated that the leave and flexible employment provisions available to them and accessed by them contributed strongly to their level of engagement. The availability of informal arrangements was highly valued by employees and again this was found across all age and gender groups.

#### **7.3.1.9 Engagement—employee summary**

All participants indicated that they had good levels of engagement. It is evident that engagement covers more than just the salary paid, but derives from a number of different areas according to each individual, such as being able to achieve something in which they have pride or that they believe will make a difference. Many participants

identified reciprocity between employees and the organisation as important, along with the benefits of working in a team environment and the importance of having good managers and leaders.

### **7.3.2 Managers and engagement**

The managers were able to identify what they believe their employees' expectations and needs were in relation to engagement and how, as managers, they try to meet these needs in a timely manner and in a resource-competitive environment. Managers demonstrated an understanding of the factors that contribute to employee engagement, along with the need to provide interesting work, commensurate remuneration, a good work environment, sound management and work-life balance provisions, including flexible work arrangements. Managers also noted these factors as important for attraction and retention.

One manager stated that there are difficulties at times in meeting all requests for leave or flexible work arrangements. Sometimes this has meant a reduction in workforce capability and productivity. Being able to manage flexibility equitably and fairly was at times a challenge for the managers interviewed, and one in which formal and informal arrangements need to be considered. All managers provided examples of employees accessing both formal and informal arrangements. The majority of managers believed that they managed the arrangements for flexible work well, but when asked about future requirements they weren't able to indicate their level of confidence to manage this well and meet the majority of employees' requests whilst maintaining productivity.

For M5 (a 50-year-old female manager with five employees), engagement and retention are important and are addressed by providing ongoing opportunities for people to diversify their skills and knowledge and for career development. Being in a public sector organisation, according to M5, is difficult because of the changing political, social and environmental landscapes. M2 (a 54-year-old male manager with six people reporting directly to him) found flexibility a positive, providing that work demands were met, and stated:

*I am happy for my staff to have a day off a particular reason. I don't need to know why they are not going to be here. I certainly encourage them to do that. I think that within the organisation we are as flexible as we can be, given the demands placed on us and the conditions that we are bound by.*

Managers' views about the organisation's policies and practices were sought in order to obtain an understanding of what systematic processes assist managers with employee engagement. M1 (a 44-year-old female), in discussing workplace flexibility,

noted that whilst HR has evolved over time, placing more responsibility on line managers, she still held that HR needed to develop and implement policies to allow line managers to have good relationships with their staff members. Managers responsible for employee engagement commented that organisational culture is important to achieving good engagement. M7 (a 48-year-old female manager of four employees) noted:

*There has recently been a better focus on managing people, and that the culture has changed. It is a supportive environment: one that hadn't always been particularly good at managing people over the years, but the current management structure had undergone changes by which people's abilities are now fostered and their contributions to the workforce planned.*

Managers were asked whether they believed that they needed additional development or training in order to manage employees or employee engagement and M1 (a 44-year-old female with less than six months service) indicated that she would, but at the same time, given her work pressures, she would prefer to leave HR to deal with employee matters about workplace arrangements (such as leave and flexitime) and to communicate with her or the employee about such matters. The majority of managers believed that they should be a conduit for information on employment matters and that they would welcome further development in being able to address such issues as expansion and contraction of the workforce, machinery of government changes, dealing with procedural issues, and managing performance. M4 (a 56-year-old male manager with twenty-four people directly reporting to him) commented that his Agency undertook a range of measures to achieve flexible work arrangements for all employees, such as working at home, and this type of provision assisted with engagement levels.

M5 (a female manager) also believed that there is a need to offer different levels of flexibility in workplace arrangements to assist with maintaining employee engagement levels, and that altering starting and finishing work times is easily accommodated, as is meeting part-time work arrangements. However, having people away for blocks of time can create uneven workloads and jeopardise output. M5 held that having additional people resources is necessary for future workforce productivity and performance. M3 (a manager of seventeen employees) believed that the need for flexibility is necessary and will continue to increase, given employees' caring responsibilities because of ageing. M6 (a female manager of six employees) indicated that having more resources to gain better workload levels and work-life balance is necessary, and highlighted the need for development of more flexible arrangements in work policies.



M7 (a female manager aged 48 years) noted that flexibility in starting and finishing times, rostered days off and flex-time was decided on a team basis and should only involve her when there is disagreement or when minimum workload levels aren't able to be met. For M7, team decision-making is important and contributes to job satisfaction, good engagement levels and improved team outcomes. Eight of the nine managers interviewed felt strongly about the importance of having informal practices in their sections with which to provide flexible work arrangements. When asked about the type of informal arrangements, the researcher was advised that it could mean a one-off arrangement or a longer-term arrangement that did not require formal approval, was within their scope of responsibility and therefore did not impinge on work productivity. Informal practices appeared, from the managers' perspective, to be a key factor for engagement.

M4 (a 56-year-old male manager with 24 employees) commented that the alignment of the organisation with manager and employee values is paramount to achieving a productive and engaged workforce. For M4:

*... the values and alignment require good leadership, the right employment framework and sound people-management practices. It is easier to identify with the values of your manager because you're working with them all the time. Organisational values are the words put up on the wall, and that is what they are: to a manager it is hopefully living values as a demonstration that employees can see, follow and value.*

M8 (a 40-year-old male with 12 people directly reporting to him) said that he will continue to use informal arrangements to meet the flexibility required by his section. He indicated that at times it is difficult to meet all requests, given workloads and leave arrangements, but the section still managed to do the work and there appears to be a high level of commitment, from which he derived job satisfaction. M8 held that flexible work arrangements are essential for good employee engagement. Meeting employees' flexible work needs, training needs and organisational demands was, for M1 (a 44-year-old female manager), a key management responsibility and role. For M9 (a 51-year-old male manager with 25 employees), the ability to promote from within was considered difficult, given the legislative requirements, but he felt it was important and part of good succession planning, given the specialist role his Agency fulfils. M9 was concerned that many people in his section are not interested in further development or training, and that with the new technologies there is resistance that impacts on productivity. For M9 engagement meant having employees with the right motivation, willing to embrace further development and to co-operatively adapt to changing technologies.

In summary, manager participants were able to identify a range of factors that contribute to employee engagement and how issues relating to organisational culture, performance expectations and management style also affect employee engagement. Managers recognised their active roles in contributing to employee engagement. Managers did not discuss in depth the way they measure employee engagement or whether engagement varied on the basis of employees' roles and workload challenges or whether different practices were needed to meet different age groups' perceptions about their employment.

### **7.3.3 Agency and engagement**

Agencies adopted a range of different policies and practices to address employee engagement, some of which are legislatively based. Several Agencies have extended these policies in order to attract, engage and retain key people. All Agencies indicated they had workforce diversity policies. The survey asked whether these policies were measured, and all but one Agency responded to this question. Responding Agencies reported different measurement and reporting mechanisms. Two indicated that they did not measure this policy, whilst others indicated it was measured through the provision of training. Three Agencies held that their diversity policies were measured by considering the number of notifications of incidents or grievances, and three agencies indicated that performance indicators were included in their diversity or disability action plans. Agencies are beginning to acknowledge and address the importance of engagement, but this could not be described as being consistent across Agencies, nor one that could be considered as a 'best practice' approach. Table 8 summarises Agency responses on flexible working arrangements.

**Table 8: Agency survey results**

Workplace arrangements	Agency responses
Flexible start and finish times	All Agencies indicated a 'yes' response, however, two Agencies said that it was not applicable to all employees because of shift work.
Flex-time arrangements	In place by all Agencies but with different types of arrangements and corresponding management policies and practices.
SSALS	Available across all Agencies.
Self-rostering	14% of Agencies indicated that this was in place.
Job share	50% of Agencies indicated that they had job sharing in their agency.
Leave without pay	All Agencies indicated that they had this provision.
Graduated return to work following parental, maternity, paternity or other leave	71% of Agencies indicated that they had policies in place for this.
Phased-in retirement	71% of Agencies indicated a 'yes' response to this question.
Leave bank	Only one Agency indicated that they have this provision.
Graduated return to work after LWOP	43% of Agencies indicated that they have this arrangement.
Graduated return to work following long-term leave because of illness or workers compensation	All Agencies indicated that they had this provision.
Career break or sabbatical leave	All Agencies indicated that they had this provision and one agency stated that this was incorporated into its LWOP policy.
Altered work arrangements such as compressed working weeks	Two Agencies indicated that this was available.
Altered working arrangements such as three months work followed by three months unpaid leave	Only one Agency indicated that it had this provision.
Fixed term working arrangements such as fixed months of work to cover high workload or high absence periods	Two Agencies indicated that they used this arrangement and one Agency noted that it is especially accessed this during high workload periods.

Only four Agencies (28.5%) indicated how many employees had accessed any of these provisions, which appear to represent less than 10% of each Agency's workforce. However, not noted here is a number of informal arrangements employed, which several Agencies indicated were delegated down to work areas.

The survey results indicate that flexible work arrangements and leave provisions were mainly supported by formal policies, and included parental leave, study leave, working from home, phased-in retirement, State Service Accumulated Leave Scheme (SSALS) and leave without pay. These provisions are incorporated into awards or agreements, and whilst Agencies identified a number of other flexible work arrangements, these were informal, *ad hoc* in type and frequency and not consistently applied across all sections or Agencies.

Three Agencies indicated other provisions to support employee work-life balance, including Employee Assistance Programs, health and wellbeing programs and taking overtime as time in lieu, through to individual arrangements such as the provision of a car park and assisting employees with short-term absences from the workplace. Health and wellbeing programs are either being developed or increased in response to government policy.

Agencies were asked whether they undertook employee or climate surveys in order to identify how employees regard their employment conditions and arrangements. Seven Agencies indicated that they undertook employee surveys, with some indicating that these are held annually, and others that they are held every two years. These Agencies indicated that the results of the surveys were available to all employees. Six Agencies didn't reply to this question but indicated their participation in the Office of the State Service Commissioner's (OSSC) surveys. Of those that undertook surveys, six Agencies responded that they benchmark these activities and two of those Agencies indicated that they benchmark only against their previous surveys. Five Agencies indicated that they used survey results for workforce planning or for considering changing needs of employees with regards to work-life balance or engagement and/or retention.

As another measure to ascertain how Agencies evaluate employee engagement and retention, the survey asked Agencies whether they offered separating employees the opportunity to participate in separation or exit interviews or questionnaires. The range of responses to this question demonstrated different understandings about the use or benefits of such an instrument. Nine Agencies indicated that they undertook a form of separation interview or questionnaire, one Agency indicated that this was not always offered and one Agency said that it was currently developing one. Some Agencies undertook a paper-based questionnaire or online form that may or may not involve the manager at the time the questionnaire is completed, and one Agency indicated that it offers an interview following the completion of a questionnaire. Seven Agencies

indicated that separation interviews and questionnaires are reported collectively for the purposes of understanding separation reasons and how employees felt about their employment. Five Agencies indicated that such results were not collated or reported to senior management.

The findings for engagement differ across the employee, manager and Agency groups. Having interesting work is noted as an important engagement factor by employee and manager participants but not by Agencies. Similarly, employees and managers recognise that salary, interesting work, good work environment and flexible work arrangements contributed to engagement although these were not acknowledged by informants from all participating Agencies. Whilst Agencies appear to be commencing activities to identify and monitor engagement, it has not so far been included in what could be described as 'leveraging' HR in a practical or strategic sense.

#### **7.3.4 Engagement—summary**

Employee participants were able to identify that individual job satisfaction and engagement is not based on one or two elements. Rather, it is derived from a range of factors that are similar across age, gender, classification and employment status groups. The research identified that engagement is derived from many of the factors identified as attractors: job security, varied and interesting work, good people to work with, making a valid contribution to achieving good outcomes for the section and community, having good managers, manageable workload levels and being able to access a range of flexible work arrangements and leave provisions.

For some employees the ability to be creative or innovative was a strong contributor to engagement and job satisfaction. Mobility was seen as less important to many older employees and not a critical factor for either young or mature-aged employees. A majority of participants also valued having informal or *ad hoc* arrangements to meet short or longer-term flexible needs.

There were individual opinions about the importance these factors contribute to engagement levels. One of the differences related to participants who had tertiary qualifications (or those progressing towards qualifications through cadetships or, for graduate employees, post-graduate qualifications). This group held higher expectations about their work roles, remuneration and continuing professional development. Other variations could be considered to be a reflection of individuals' choices about what work means to them and what career goals they may have.

Managers were able to identify many of the engagement factors raised by employees during the research and also identified and understood the need for good practices and policies, consistent and equitable management in terms of work allocation and task variety, access to flexible work arrangements and providing opportunities for mobility or rotation where possible. Managers noted they had to be aware of employee needs that contribute to engagement and of their roles as managers in being able to provide this.

Agencies were able to identify the need to have engaged employees, and whilst some Agencies undertake surveys to determine employees' engagement or levels of job satisfaction, there is limited evidence of how this type of information informs HR policies and practices, beyond the minimum legal or prescribed requirements. Leave provisions, flexitime arrangements and formal application processes were noted, but matters relating to work environment, team skills, knowledge and skill transfer were not readily identified.

In summary, there is not a clear alignment between employees, managers and Agencies regarding key engagement factors. Agencies were unable to demonstrate how they manage employee engagement, job satisfaction, wellbeing, morale and productivity. Agencies identified the need for high levels of engagement, but the policies and practices are not always either in place or consistently managed or communicated by senior leadership or HR across all Agencies. Nor was there recognition of the need for line managers to manage the environment to provide the best outcomes for the organisation and employee engagement. This may result in the inability of HR policies and practices to address engagement for ongoing sustainability and productivity.

## **7.4 Retention**

In order to better understand the factors that may contribute to retention in a contemporary public sector work environment, participants were asked about the factors that influenced their continuing employment in the service.

### **7.4.1 Employees and retention**

#### **7.4.1.1 Retention—job security**

Job security was found to be important as an attractor, and plays a clear role in retention, though the different age groups had different ideas of what it means. Job security was indicated as a strong attraction factor, and plays an important role in retention. Many participants saw job security as a major reason to remain in the service. However, some older participants indicated that because they had seen

previous contractions and expansions in the workforce and are now closer to retirement, they are not as concerned about job security as they were earlier in their careers (e.g. E16, a female aged 35 years). Many participants stated that job security was not about continuing in the same job for many years, but is rather something that allows for changing individual circumstances: flexible employment, opportunities for development and career advancement and the ability to have interesting and challenging work. Several younger participants indicated that job security, in respect of their engagement and continuing service, also encompassed the ability to take extended periods of leave (paid or unpaid) and to return to a workplace that offered them challenging work and the opportunity to advance their careers (E12, a 27-year-old female employee).

One participant commented that, given the current economic climate, people are feeling less secure, so job security is probably the number one retention factor. For M1 (a 44-year-old female), a permanent job provides the job security that is critical to her remaining in the TSS, and she would seriously consider seeking other employment if that were to change. M3 (a 48-year-old female employee) noted that job security had decreased in the previous 12 months but was greater than in the private sector, and she elected to remain in the service for the employment security.

#### **7.4.1.2 Retention—interesting work and workload levels**

Having interesting and challenging work was identified by participants as a critical component for engagement and retention. It should be noted that workload levels and ongoing enjoyment of the position were reasons stated by participants regarding their continuing service in the TSS. The questions of workload and work-life balance appear to be key factors that would affect people's level of engagement and ongoing employment intentions. Most participants indicated that they would continue to perform to the best of their ability and remain in the service providing the work is interesting and enjoyable. As noted by E6 (38-year-old male employee) who has worked in the private sector:

*... it is a luxury coming into the public sector and being able to undertake interesting duties and tasks. This has improved my feelings of self-worth and in having a better work-life balance. These factors are the ones that will determine how long I stay.*

Participants were asked whether having high or excessive workloads would factor into the ability to enjoy their work and whether, if this were to become problematic, they would think about resigning. E1 (a 35-year-old female employee) held that if she

ceased to find the work enjoyable and she had the capacity not to work, she would resign.

E17 (a 20-year-old female part-time administrative assistant) stated that having a high workload suited her because she likes to be busy, but with reducing staff numbers things were becoming more stressful and she personally felt that things could be improved. However, whilst many participants indicated that they would like work levels to be slightly lower, it is something that they would continue to try and cope with if they were still enjoying the work. E2 (a 53-year-old male employee) indicated that the job varies, so that the workload varies, and if the work became less enjoyable and the workload became excessive he would consider leaving.

For E4 (a 46-year-old male employee) the level of workload concerned more the volume of work and the time taken to do it, and he would look elsewhere if the workplace wasn't fun or if there were unresolvable conflicts. E4 believed that one can only do so much work in a day, which was something that was acknowledged and understood in his team. E5 (a 65-year-old female part-time employee) believed that workload levels vary naturally, which isn't an issue; this was supported by several other participants.

E21 (a 41-year-old female full-time employee) said that if she couldn't manage the workload because of age or illnesses, she would consider moving on so that somebody younger could do the job. Two participants indicated that if the workload was at a higher level over a long period of time, and their ability to have a good work-life balance reduced, they would consider other options. M1 stated that she accepted at times, one works more than the standard 7.6 hours in a day, which is part of being a manager.

For M6, however, workload levels appeared to be increasing, and without new staff being appointed she was concerned, both for herself and the section, that the ability to produce quality work may be at risk. M6 (a 55-year-old female part-time employee) commented that her role has changed over time and the ability to manage the additional responsibilities has threatened her work-life balance. This factor has resulted in M6 stating that if this were to continue then it may be a reason for leaving the TSS. M3 (a 48-year-old female employee) had already stepped down a level because of workload pressures and she indicated she had not been enjoying the position. Her current position did have a high workload level but didn't involve working extra hours and therefore did not constitute a concern about whether she should continue in the service.



Most participants did not view workload as a strong factor, either in regards to continuing their employment or how this would change their levels of engagement. The question of high workloads did not appear to be a factor that either younger or older employees viewed as being critical to determining whether to remain in their current employment, but a factor that does influence such decisions.

#### **7.4.1.3 Retention—reward, recognition and teamwork**

Fifteen participants indicated that to stay in the public service in the longer term they would need to receive better ongoing rewards and recognition. E18 (a 23-year-old female graduate employee) stated that she would need to be encouraged and included in team activities, and E20 (a 20-year-old male administrative assistant) noted that it was important to have a good team and to receive recognition for effort, both at an individual and a team level. M5 (a female over 45 years of age) believed that reward and recognition are important at team and individual levels and that building collegiality is important. M3 (a 48-year-old female) noted that if she wasn't encouraged or recognised for her effort she might start looking elsewhere.

Being consulted by managers and co-workers was also deemed to be an important consideration in continuing in the service. Being consulted was regarded as important: E1 (a 35-year-old female part-time employee) indicated that if there was no improvement in this area she would look for work elsewhere. M3 (a 48-year-old female) held that job satisfaction is gained from being able to contribute to discussions about the workplace, and if this wasn't possible she would consider leaving. Not being encouraged or valued would also be a factor for E12 (a 27-year-old female), who commented that without these things her work quality and level of morale would decline.

The question of recognition and reward was perceived differently by the participants in terms of the form it took, and a difference was also seen in views about the ability to contribute to the team and participate in collegial activities. However, the differences identified appear to be based on individual preferences rather than age.

#### **7.4.1.4 Retention—staying in current role**

To determine the retention factors directly relevant to employees' current circumstances, participants were asked whether they foresaw staying in their present roles, and if so, what could be better or different to improve their continued employment. Most participants who discussed this believed they would continue in the service with their current levels of challenges, interesting work, salary, flexible work

options, good team and management support and didn't foresee leaving soon. Twelve participants (under 45 years of age) stated that they liked their current roles and were more enthusiastic and accepting that at some point in time they would want to move to another role.

For E17 (a 20-year-old female) '*...it would be having higher staffing levels, involving more people with technical expertise and fewer managers, as it seems that the managers are always managing their managers: our agency appears quite top-heavy*'. E7 (a 50-year-old male team leader) stated that the current organisational practices and management of the team are important factors for his continuing employment, along with striving to achieve salary satisfaction and work-life balance. In addition, E7 stated that employees need to have ownership of what they do and the processes involved. E18 (a 23-year-old female graduate) would like to see an improvement in the way leave is managed, as she sees little transparency in how decisions are made, but she would not consider resigning from her current position or the TSS because of this.

E1 (a 35-year-old female) couldn't identify anything that she would like to see changed: '*...it is a very good fit*'. E4 (age 46 years, male) noted that he could receive greater remuneration in the private sector or as a contractor, but it is not something that he would like to do and that higher salary isn't the most important aspect in his employment as there are other benefits. E5 (age 65 years, female, part-time project officer) stated that she enjoys the position and would like to be able to move between part-time and full-time in the next few years; but she finds her manager unwilling to consider such arrangements, therefore this could become a resignation factor.

Only a quarter of employees indicated that they had specific training or development needs or identified the role this plays in retention. However, this was more strongly indicated by participants under the age of 45 years, which is evidenced in the following comments. E16 (aged 35 years, female) commented that training and development was an important and positive reason for staying in the service and that having training and development improves morale: '*...it would improve my attitude and therefore my performance*'. E3 (a 25-year-old, part-time project officer) similarly held that further development and training is important to keep her brain active and to maintain focus. However, E18 (a 23-year-old female) stated that training and development is 'okay' for some positions, but that in others you just need to work and it is not a factor in considering whether to stay in her current position.

At the time the interviews were undertaken, several new awards and agreements had commenced within the TSS. Most participants were positive regarding their current

salary levels, saying that they believed that their salaries would remain at a reasonably competitive level to other sectors; and this therefore was a positive retention factor.

Participants expressed that whilst staying in their current role is a retention factor, a number of participants foresaw the ability to have periods of rotation as being important too. E16 (a 35-year-old female) believed that job rotation would be good because it would help build skills and knowledge. E6 (male, aged 38 years) also believed that job rotation is a positive in that it allowed one to learn new things, to challenge one's self and to gain a broader level of understanding about the organisation. E6 noted that sometimes there is a 'flip side': it pushes people outside their comfort zones, which could cause work performance problems, but it very much depended on the individual and the work. E9 (female, aged 51 years) noted that job rotation in an area of interest would contribute to her feelings of fulfilment and would flow on to positive work-life balance.

Whilst the issue of job rotation or mobility was not commented on by all participants, the researcher asked them whether they foresaw that they would like the opportunity to move to another area and for what reasons they would choose to do so. For E17 (female, aged 20 years) it was important to '*...achieve diversity in employment*' and a career pathway where rotation was voluntary. However, for E6 (male, aged 36 years), rotation and occupational mobility were important retention factors:

*One of the lessons I learnt made me realise that spending too long in one place isn't good for anybody. The idea is to go out and gain skills and become competent and then go and challenge you to do new things.*

E15 (a 30-year-old female project officer) indicated that job rotation would be detrimental to maintaining her work-life balance and was therefore a concern for her ongoing employment intentions. E10 (female, aged 36 years) stated that her work is varied and detailed enough and she would not seek rotation. Two participants indicated they would consider job rotation in the future, on the proviso that they maintained their current working arrangements. Three participants indicated that they had moved previously, via transfers or promotion, and that they did not currently wish to move, nor did they see that this would assist them in gaining a better work-life balance. It appears that job rotation and mobility have both positive and negative connotations for retention.

#### 7.4.1.5 Retention—flexible work and leave arrangements

Participants raised a number of reasons why they would reconsider their employment, of which the most common were: if they weren't enjoying the position, if the work levels became excessive or if they were unable to achieve a good work-life balance or access flexible employment. Other factors included opportunities for more interesting work or better salary outside the service, although these were not strongly expressed by the majority of participants. M3 (female, aged 48 years) noted that her current job is interesting and that if it went back to being boring and mundane, then she would be lured by more interesting work elsewhere. M3 held that she would consider an offer of work if it was more interesting or if the prospective organisation had a good reputation, with good values, and respected its employees.

E7 (a male, aged 51 years) noted that in his work section they try and get a balance between salary satisfaction (work done, money paid) and his work-life balance satisfaction:

*If you can get a reasonable balance, one may weigh more than the other if you're pretty happy with both and get a reasonable balance of both I think that that's your satisfaction and the way flexible work is managed as group and it helps us enjoy the atmosphere more and be more productive.*

E5 stated that if the current flexible working arrangements stopped, it would affect her engagement levels and she would possibly leave. E8 (a 19-year-old female cadet) remarked that whilst she currently doesn't access any flexible arrangements, that may change in future to care for a parent. Several other participants also identified the need to manage work-life balance as a potential determinant in remaining in the TSS, both currently and in the future. M3 (a female over 45 years of age) saw the ability to go part-time for family reasons as important, but couldn't see how that could be accommodated currently or in the future. Participants who had accessed or considered accessing flexible work arrangements, including leave without pay, found it was a positive factor that therefore contributes to engagement and retention.

Most participants believed that on the whole their managers were supportive of their need for flexibility and to have a good work-life balance, and anticipated that this would need to continue into the future for them to remain in the service. There were mixed responses from participants on whether changing their current leave arrangements would contribute to their continuing employment. Five participants (aged over 45 years) indicated that taking long service leave or leave without pay may contribute to their levels of job satisfaction and ongoing employment. For E7 (a 50-year-old male), taking

leave at half pay or working blocks of time would contribute to his continuing employment past the minimum retirement age. E5 (female, aged 65 years) believed that having blocks of time off work would suit younger people but would not contribute to her levels of work-life balance or retention prospects. E6 (male, aged 38 years) commented that there appears to be more flexibility regarding leave in the public sector and that the range of leave entitlements meets his current and possible future needs.

Three participants indicated that they would like more flexibility in being able to take leave at half pay, whilst others had not considered this as a possible future arrangement. E21 (a 41-year-old female) believed that SSALS is difficult to understand and requires preplanning, and is therefore not something she had previously considered to assist with future work-life balance. E12 (a 27-year-old female) stated that working three months on and three months off would be good, but she is concerned that the workload would be unfair on those remaining. Two participants indicated that whilst they would not like different arrangements prior to retirement, they would like their organisations to offer a range of post-retirement employment options.

For M9 (male, aged 51 years), having a range of different employment and workplace arrangements in the future was considered interesting, not only as a manager, but also as an individual. He argued that the organisation needs to offer diverse employment arrangements and management practices to meet future workforce demands. For many participants, leave without pay was not a future option because of the financial impost involved.

Five participants were unfamiliar with the term 'career break', but when it was explained to them they believed it was a positive and something they would consider. E10 (a 36-year-old female) stated:

*... it is something that I might be interested in. However, it takes about 18 months for someone to be up to scratch to be able just come into work unsupervised, so that might be interesting for me personally but it may not be in the best interests of the organisation. It is a lovely idea however.*

Two participants indicated that they would not consider career breaks as they would not, in their view, assist with job satisfaction, career development, work-life balance or retention. When asked whether they would, in the future, require workplace arrangements to assist with child or elder-care, 14 participants indicated their awareness of possible future needs. In fact, a majority of participants had not considered this to any degree, especially in regard to elder-care or how this may affect their working arrangements.

There were a number of workplace arrangements that participants felt would benefit their levels of engagement and continuing employment. Fifteen participants indicated that they would like to continue or to improve their ability to self-roster their working times. E10 however, commented that while it is nice to be able to start or finish early or later, at times the workload or staffing levels prevent this from happening, which becomes problematic for the section, affecting productivity and morale. Four participants indicated that they currently self-roster to meet both workload and personal life demands; these participants are in senior roles, frequently work outside core hours and see the continuation of this arrangement as a strong retention factor.

Five participants indicated they would like to change their working hours to have a compressed working week, which would contribute to a better work-life balance, but they also noted that the activities of the workplace may not be suited to this arrangement. Job sharing was another suggestion that received mixed responses from participants: almost half believed that it would be a good idea in the future, but it was not something they had thought about in any detail. Two participants indicated that they did not believe that their current roles would suit job sharing. E3 (female, aged 25) felt currently supported in the work environment with regards to flexible working arrangements, and expected this to continue into the future; this view was shared by the majority of participants. In summary, it would appear that flexible work and leave arrangements are important, but participants did not indicate how strongly they impact on their intention to remain with the TSS.

Flexible work arrangements were valued highly by all age groups and there was an indication that such arrangements were not always formal and not always provided in the same way for everyone, but that they were provided on the basis of need and that it didn't impinge on other employees' workloads. The presence of flexible work arrangements would appear based on these findings, to be critical across attraction, engagement and retention.

#### **7.4.1.6 Retention and retirement**

Participants aged over 45 were asked about their retirement age plans and how these would affect their ongoing employment and working arrangements. For E7 (a 50-year-old male), retirement was something that he hadn't thought about in great detail: he foresaw himself working beyond the age of 60 and reducing his hours to three days a week. More than 80% of this group stated that they would continue working in their current Agencies beyond the minimum retirement age, but could not indicate a definite retirement date. This group expressed the belief that whilst they were enjoying the

work, found the work interesting and they felt supported and valued by their co-workers and the organisation, they would continue working, but with reduced hours. In regards to seeking information about retirement options, including superannuation and workplace arrangements, this group believed that the primary responsibility lay with them but that the organisation should discuss these matters openly with them. Only one participant had a firm retirement date in mind and did not anticipate returning to the workforce. Three participants believed that they would downshift to a lower classification or to a position with fewer demands when they reached the minimum retirement age or prior to leaving the workforce permanently.

Four participants in this group also felt strongly about not talking about their potential retirement in the workplace because they felt that their co-workers and/or managers would not take them seriously as productive and contributing members of their sections. They strongly held that they wanted to continue in the workforce, meeting new challenges and contributing to section outputs, and that they had numerous skills, a wealth of knowledge and made positive contributions at work. M2 (a 54-year-old male) indicated that his retirement has been semi-planned and he would consider moving to another area of the TSS where there was less stress in future years. He added that retirement would be dependent on work enjoyment and having a good work-life balance.

M9 (male, aged 51 years) noted that his retirement plans, whilst not specific in terms of date and arrangements, would involve doing some independent work. M4 (a 56-year-old male) stated that he was '*...ashamed to say*' that he has no retirement plan, that he needs one, that he is not sure of how to go about preparing one or who to speak to and he would not discuss it at the workplace for fear of being treated differently. If organisations are wishing to retain employees beyond the minimum retirement age, then the evidence provided by the participants would indicate that there is a need for greater understanding and adaptable workforce management practices to meet the concerns of this employee group.

#### **7.4.2 Managers and retention**

When discussing the proportion of employees over the age of 45 years in the service, and their potential for retirement in the next five to 10 years, managers identified this as a major factor in being able to continue delivering their section's activities. Asked whether remuneration and employment frameworks needed significant change, many of the managers did not believe so, apart from specific occupational groups for which significant salary increases would be needed. However, having better arrangements to

meet employee needs for flexible working arrangements, including SSALS or leave without pay, was indicated as being needed. M8 stated that for future workforce recruitment and retention to be successful, organisations need to consider the expectations of employees, especially older ones, and need to ask questions of employees about where they want to go and what they want to do as far as work was concerned. Similar to the comments about engagement, managers were aware of the ageing of the workforce and limited labour market activities, and how these will impact on operational productivity and performance. There was a willingness among managers to consider a range of options that could contribute to retention, and they employed a range of formal practices and policies to address retention issues. There appeared to be an acceptance that the organisation would address retention but that managers also undertook a range of informal practices within their work sections to improve engagement and, in turn, retention.

Managers viewed job rotation (including secondments) positively, but identified problems when people were seconded to positions in other Agencies and didn't return to their original positions. One manager (M8) believed that his Agency was supportive of rotation opportunities, but that his job would be easier if there was more support from the central service areas, such as HR. This manager held that job rotation was important to the individual in that it provided the opportunity to develop new skills and that this could contribute to retaining employees. Job rotation was, according to M8, also important to the organisation by enabling it to deploy people to sections where and when required.

M8 (a 40-year-old male) and M6 (female, aged 55 years) commented that they had arranged for altered patterns of work for a number of their section members, either to meet family or personal needs. These arrangements proved successful and allowed for flexibility without impacting on productivity. M6 considered it important that people-management is communicated effectively and that people are aware that flexible arrangements may be possible at some times and difficult at other times. M6 saw this as important in developing, implementing and managing retention strategies and practices.

M8 held that the service needs to become more proactive in addressing ageing workforce issues, and that managers should encourage conversations about retirement and pre-retirement work and opportunities. They considered that the organisation needs to provide information and support, which would allow for more effective planning for staffing levels, succession planning and opportunities for mentoring or



coaching. M8 believed that as managers they are time-poor and stretched in being able to do this, either effectively or at all. All managers were concerned with the potential retirement of a large percentage of their workforce, not only in terms of being able to get the work done, but also in terms of knowledge management. Managers indicated that the type and number of current policies to retain older employees were limited and that they weren't sure of what other arrangements were possible to address the challenges of an ageing workforce.

On the question of internal or intra-agency job rotation, a number of managers were hesitant to indicate their support. This hesitancy related more to the actual application and management of job rotation, though the concept and perceived benefits were supported by managers. For M8, job rotation was a difficult matter to manage for two reasons: first, the time taken to replace the person and have the new person skilled up; and second, there was a high likelihood that the person on rotation or secondment would not return. This was also indicated by several other managers, and there would appear to be some agreement that this area warrants further investigation and possible policy development, as it would contribute to engagement and retention levels.

Managers were asked what they believed they would need to manage future contemporary workplaces. M8 believed that, ultimately, what was most important was having the right staff and the right levels of staffing to achieve what the organisation requires. M5 (a 50-year-old female manager) stated that this is, for the most part, achieved within her section but indicated it would be helpful to have additional training on dealing with equity and flexibility. M5 was not confident in being able to manage the competing demands for workplace flexibility and achieving the work required. M7 (female, age 48 years) maintained:

*It is more difficult to manage people in the public sector because of the different outcomes, different goals and different focuses that a public sector operates in, even within a predetermined framework, that as a manager you are accountable to certain people, you are accountable to the public purse, you have a certain code of conduct to uphold whereas in the private sector you could be hired and fired tomorrow: it is a different operating environment.*

For M7, the ageing of the workforce was a challenge, and she is pessimistic she will be able to meet agency workload demands, adding that younger employees appear to want career progression in a way and at a rate that the service cannot provide.

There were also differences in how managers believed they were supported by their HR sections and, more importantly, the people-management practices and policies

provided by their Agencies. One manager stated that performance management, in particular managing underperformance, was difficult given current Agency guidelines and the legislative framework. M9 (male, aged 51 years) also commented on this, and said it was very hard to help employees who are not happy in the job but who do not want to leave either: *'...we need to meet their needs; we need flexibility to retain skills, but that the workplace is a more supportive than when they started'*.

M2 (a 54-year-old male) noted that they had several people around 70 years of age working for them, and that their knowledge and enthusiasm assisted others and therefore increased the performance and morale of themselves and others. Two managers remarked that they had had concerns when initially appointed as managers, as they had in their section older people who resented younger managers; however, over time this lessened and they acknowledged the wealth of experience of older employees. Retaining older employees is important to managers in being able to meet organisational requirements.

M3 (female, aged 48 years) noted that in managing an multi-generational workforce, there are difficulties but that it is more a question of individual preferences as opposed to age, in that some people prefer formality and others appreciate informal working arrangements irrespective of their age. M8 (a male senior executive officer) commented that allowing employees leave to pursue career opportunities was a good thing because a number of them had returned and brought valuable skills and knowledge back to the organisation. M8 held that a number of his younger employees were keen to access this provision.

Managers were asked whether there should be different policies and practices in workplace management, based on different generational groups. M8 commented that he didn't believe in different policies for different ages, that there needs to be consistency with the same guidelines for everyone, and that managers should be consistent in how they manage. M9 noted that the generational differences he had observed were, on the whole, positive and that whilst there may be certain attributes more evident in one generation than another, it is people's contribution and willingness to undertake the work in a positive atmosphere that is more important. For managers, managing fairly was important and they held that this was important to retaining employees.

Whilst discussing recruitment M7 stated that in his experience it is important to have age diversity, along with other personal characteristics, and not to recruit the same type of people all the time, which reduces flexibility and innovation. M4 (a 56-year-old male)

was concerned that changes in technology, and the disappearance of lower-level positions have stymied the employment of younger people and changed the pattern of employment within the public sector. M4 saw that there may be a need to have different policies for different generational groups but that it may be the individual's perspective that is the key factor rather than the actual age difference. The understanding provided by managers with regards to age or generational differences was found to be important in their ability to manage engagement and retention of their work areas.

In summary, managers have different views regarding employee perspectives about current and future workforce arrangements that may be needed with regards to attraction, engagement and retention. It is notable that managers hold different levels or depths of understanding regarding workplace arrangements, not only from the employees' point of view, but also the organisational policies in place and the use of informal arrangements to meet employees' development, job satisfaction and work-life balance needs. Managers' awareness of generational issues, caring responsibilities and team values were also evident but there were concerns as to the extent of their roles and responsibilities in addressing employees' needs within their organisational practices and policies but not always necessarily reinforced by a formal strategy.

#### **7.4.3 Agency and retention**

The survey asked whether Agencies had any retention strategies in place. One was currently developing a formal strategy, and the remaining responding Agencies indicated that offering altered work arrangements, changes in performance management, training and development and flexible work arrangements form part of their retention strategies. The survey responses reveal that Agencies are aware of the need to have appropriate strategies in place to address retention, especially for critical occupational groups.

Four Agencies indicated they did not provide career counselling and two others indicated that they did provide it informally on an as-needed basis. Two Agencies responded that career counselling was available externally but only on a case-by-case basis. One Agency indicated it has an intranet site to support people in making career choices; another indicated that it had a career coaching programme under development. Only two Agencies indicated they had age-management policies in place, which involved the option of phased-in retirement. One Agency advised that its age-management policy not only involved phased-in retirement but also formed part of its succession planning at branch level. Seven Agencies indicated that they required

their managers and supervisors to undertake training relating to diversity management; other Agencies indicated that they did not have this in place, nor was it a requirement.

In order to identify how Agencies are addressing future workforce requirements, the survey asked Agencies what they considered the most important issues in meeting future workforce capability and demands. The following table details responses to this question. The need for recruitment of skilled people, training and development opportunities and managing flexible work requests were all strongly indicated. Table 9 provides Agency responses regarding future workforce challenges.

**Table 9: Future workforce capability issues**

Issue	Agency Responses
Recruitment in general	43% of Agencies indicated that this was important.
Recruiting suitably experienced/skilled people	71% of Agencies indicated that this was important.
Recruiting professionals - specific occupations	36% of Agencies indicated that this is important.
Retention of younger employees (those under the age of 30 years)	21% of Agencies indicated a 'yes' response.
Retention of older employees (those over the age of 45 years)	14% of Agencies indicated that this was important.
Retention of employees (all ages)	36% of Agencies indicated a 'yes' response.
Retention of employees aged between 30 and 45 years of age	21% of Agencies indicated that this was important.
Having a range of suitable training and development opportunities for employees, regardless of age	57% of Agencies indicated that this was important.
Meeting the flexible work requirements of employees whilst meeting operational requirements	All Agencies indicated that this was important.
Training for managers in addressing the range of work-life balance issues and management of related policies and programs	29% of Agencies indicated that this was important.
Succession planning skills and policies	64% of Agencies indicated a 'yes' response to this issue.
Adequate return to work provisions following periods of leave	Only 21% of Agencies indicated that this would be important.
Changing arrangements to work allocations and to how, where and when work is undertaken	36% of Agencies indicated that this was an important future issue.
Managing inter-generational workforces	21% of Agencies responded that this would be important.
Having appropriate additional leave policies and practices	21% Agencies identified that this was important.

Agencies were asked to identify other concerns relating to workforce capability and management currently in place or being developed to meet future workforce capability needs. Comments in reply to this related to the ability of the organisation to have the right workforce capability and capacity and an identified need for career development pathways, workforce planning and leadership and knowledge development. Other aspects included having better recruitment and progression arrangements and the ability of employees to adapt to changes in role requirements.

Also highlighted was a general need for a more flexible approach to organising work. One Agency indicated that work-life balance was a key motivator to attract, engage and to retain the 'right' employees, and considers better packaging of work-life balance opportunities and benefits to be important. For this to be successful, work-life balance needs to be better integrated into the recruitment and retention strategy through the use of good workforce planning. One Agency identified the need to develop strategies for tapping into the older workforce, given ageing demographics, and that in doing so, it will need to have an integrated range of HR policies and practices to make it a great place to work.

It is evident that Agencies have implemented, to different degrees, a number of contemporary workforce management principles and practices. The range of flexible work arrangements and leave provisions vary. Where award or agreement provisions determine certain leave entitlements, there is also evidence of additional flexibility regarding workplace arrangements and a corresponding identification that this will continue to be required in order to attract, engage and retain employees. Further, workforce management policies and development of appropriate strategies would appear to be warranted to address the retention factors noted by employees, managers and organisations.

#### **7.4.4 Retention—summary**

When considering their ongoing employment with the TSS, employee participants identified many similar factors relating to engagement and attraction that also applied to their ongoing employment in the TSS. Job security, interesting and varied work, good people to work with and making a worthwhile contribution were all identified as important to their continuing service in the TSS. Access to flexible work arrangements, including leave provisions, having equitable arrangements and consistency in management practices were also highlighted by participants as important. Variations did occur, but were more individually based rather than correlating with particular age groups, gender or occupations.

Employees and managers alike accepted that there were individual differences and needs with respect to work-life balance and retirement issues. There would appear to be a need for employees to be made more aware of the options available. Managers need more contemporary HR policies and practices to manage their workforce.

Whilst Agencies have a phased-in-retirement plan, its effectiveness is not measured or known. Given the high number of employees aged over 45 years, there appears to be an urgent need to address retirement and post-retirement requirements for Agencies and individuals. Retention is an important concern for Agencies, as evidenced by the survey responses, but how policies and practices are sculptured beyond the legal requirements will determine their efficiency and efficacy in this regard. Given the findings, it would appear that a bottom-up approach is warranted in determining the appropriate set of practices and policies. In addition to this, is the need for equity, access and consistent management.

The research findings show variation between employees', managers' and Agencies' responses regarding retention. To that extent, an alignment or measure of fit between employee perceptions about retention and those provided by Agencies is difficult to ascertain. This may be in part because of the development of award or agreement provisions and legislative frameworks required to be observed by Agencies and how subsequent policies and practices are developed, implemented and managed. This may also extend to how these policies and practices are used by employees and how they are measured or evaluated. It has not been possible within the parameters of this research to clearly determine or assess whether these aspects have resulted in a lag between employee needs and Agency policies and practices.

## **7.5 Work-life balance**

The research sought to identify whether work-life balance has become an important factor in considering contemporary workplace arrangements and the role this plays in attraction, engagement and retention. The ability of employees to attain work-life balance is a key contributor to their job satisfaction, engagement levels and also in considering their continued employment. Manager and employee views were sought about so that the research could gain a better understanding of what employees consider work-life balance to be and its importance to their working and personal lives. This exploration was aimed at identifying any similarities or differences in perceptions and attitudes and considering a range of diversity characteristics such as age, gender, occupational group and level. For E7, work-life balance meant being able to do one's duties at work without it impeding on things needed to be done at home, and not

having so much work that one can't meet home needs. There might be times when this is not possible, but overall E7 considered it feasible to still do the things at home he wanted but have the satisfaction that he had also done things at work needed. For E16 it was:

*...the ability to balance time with your family with the requirements of the position and your employer, and in that, still get time to spend with my child and keep my job and in that way you are a functional person at work and work harder on the days you work.*

For E18 work-life balance means '*...it shouldn't always be about work, work, work: you need to also have time for a social life and family*'. E18 identified that one can't always have the perfect mix of work and home time, but that one needs to strive to have a balance. E1 stated that work-life balance meant being happy both at work and at home; E4 also identified this, adding that '*...it is also being able to walk out of work at the end of the day, not to take work home: once work is finished it's your private life*'. E5 held that work-life balance is being able to do one's job comfortably and meet one's own and family commitments; and in her current role she can manage that. E6 elaborated by stating that:

*'...work-life balance is being able to go into work, enjoy a job and be comfortable with what you do, but being able to do some of those things that are important to life that makes a difference to your happiness. It is very easy to say I'm going to flex off, but then that imposes more work or pressure on other people at work, then I don't believe that this is work-life balance. If you can manage your time and negotiate with people and it doesn't impact on your workload and you can still go off and do the things that are important to you and your family, then that is real work-life balance'.*

Participants said that the need for work-life balance changes with age and life stage. As noted by E11, there are changes throughout life, and when he started in the public sector he was happy with a nine-to-five job; he wanted challenging work and sought different positions in order to fulfil that need. Then in his 30s and 40s, when family came along, the need for less challenging work became important. E13 held that work-life balance means being able to accommodate both areas; it is important to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, but that it has to be balanced to allow one to do other things that people find rewarding. E13 provided an example of a leaders program he was involved in, that required work being done in work time and in his own time. For E13 this was a balance between being able to participate in an interesting program and also taking personal responsibility by doing some of the work in his own time.

E14 identified the need for different work-life arrangements depending on age, community activities and family requirements. For E14, work-life balance is having enough time to do things he wanted in life, which he indicated are different now from 10 years ago and might be different in the future.

*It is a fluid thing; it changes and is different for people at different stages of life'. 'It is about getting the right balance—some family time, some personal time and work time—so that life isn't completely about how you define what you do in your paid work. It needs to go beyond work and for you to pursue other intellectual interests and hobbies that are challenging (E9).*

E19 stated that it was important to balance one's work and personal life, and that if one doesn't have enough personal life, one won't be happy at work. E15 held that work-life balance means flexibility, which she thinks of in terms of hours, and also in terms of the ability to work at home. For E15 *'...it's a way of being sane. It just keeps me having the ability to put time and energy to different areas outside of work and things at work and that contributes to making you a balanced person'*. E12 indicated that work-life balance means *'...not having such a huge workload and working ridiculous hours, and when that starts to happen it is a problem because one doesn't work well and that's when it can encroach on one's personal life'*. For M1 work-life balance meant:

*'...being able to do your job and what is required of you and that it is not just what the manager's view. It also means getting satisfaction for you. I need to be able to want to come to work every day and be happy in my job and the workload, achieve the things I want to achieve and be part of the whole organisation in terms of what the outcomes are. On the other side, I need my own personal life, where I can relax and do the things I need to be happy, to exercise and spend time with family and friends'*.

M1 noted that there are common areas of interest in both work and personal life, and at times these two join up. Being able to take time out to do activities such as a walk at lunchtime or to leave early was seen as a component of work-life balance for M5:

*'It is not working long hours. It is just getting the emotional, physical and intellectual balance going so that you are more productive at work and you're more evenly managed and that you are settled in your relationships'*.

M7 held that work-life balance is very much a generational issue and said that she was brought up believing work is work and home is home and therefore she doesn't take work home and if she has work to do, she will do it at the office. M7 indicated that *'...one gets paid to do a job, so one should do it well. There is an understandable move to more family friendly workplaces, but it comes back to the view that work is work'*. Whilst acknowledging this as a personal view, she also agreed that her staff need flexibility.



M7 acknowledged that her position allows her work to be structured to allow attendance to personal appointments or events, but stated her colleagues are more bound by set hours and therefore need different arrangements to achieve work-life balance. M7 held that when one leaves work, that's it, and whilst she spends more than 37 hours a week at work, this is so that once she leaves the workplace she has left work mentally and physically.

M3 stated that work-life balance means having an interesting and stimulating job that still enables her to have family or private time; it is not necessarily just a matter of physical presence, but is being able to cut off and not be worried about work things all the time. M3 stated that her workload levels weren't much different from when she was in a higher position, but the degree of concern and how it impinged on her private life was one of the factors contributing to the decision to downshift. M3 believed that she has a good work-life balance presently because she can cut off, leave work and have a separate private life and not have to worry about what is going on at work and what needs to be done in the near future.

#### **7.5.1 Managing work-life balance**

As identified in the previous section, the meaning of work-life balance for participants related to having a work and private life, and being able to achieve in both areas. Twenty-eight participants (over 30 years of age) commented on work-life conflict and spillover. Two participants under the age of 30 noted that there were times when work conflicted with their home lives. The research interest here was how they managed conflict or spillover between work and home. E7 believed it is something one adjusts to mentally, in that if something is urgent and it needs to be completed one just does it by staying back a bit longer. E7 held that his managers are aware of this and provide time off in lieu or other forms of compensation. E7 believed that she has always had this mindset, which extends to taking work home at times or having to stay late or come in early if something needs to be done. She added that if this happens often then something is not right.

E1 indicated there are times when spillover and conflict happen. She stated that it goes both ways, it is just part of life and she has learnt over time that when one is at work then work has primacy and that maintaining a professional relationship assists in separating the two spheres. E3 acknowledged that conflict can and does occur both ways. E4 stated that he has learned things either at work or at home that transfer or are applied in the other area.

For E6, the ability to manage work-life balance is something learnt over the years, and although spillover may occur both ways, it provided him with the ability to turn off negative aspects and focus on the positive. E11 commented on periods when personal circumstances were stressful, and that being productive at work was difficult, but he has used strategies to limit the negative effects. Changes to workload levels, school holidays and organisational changes all contributed to feelings of conflict or stress, as also noted by other participants; using time-management techniques and not taking work home or home to work assisted in managing this. E10 noted that she used techniques at home such as keeping a notebook near her for when she had a thought about work: she would write it down, allowing her to stop thinking about it. For E21, work has primacy during work hours and when home issues impinge on that, her strong work ethic leads her to make alternative arrangements.

M2 held that a lot of literature tries to paint work as being '*...evil in people's personal lives*', but believes that sometimes work and personal life will clash and sometimes not; they aren't all one way or the other. M1 noted many common areas of interest between work and personal life and saw positive outcomes for work and home. When workload is high and managerial support low, M6 felt stressed and stayed at work until the work was done, seeing this as priority-setting and part of the job.

The previous section identified the ways in which participants managed stressors in their work and home lives. The majority of participants believed that they have to set boundaries between work and out-of-work time, which allows them to physically and mentally adjust from one to the other. Twenty-six participants commented that they managed their work in a number of ways, including discussing workload matters with their managers, accepting that they can only do so much work in any period of time, acknowledging co-workers' needs for flexibility for personal reasons and accepting that their workloads will always vary. Eight managers remarked that having Internet and mobile phone contact was possibly beneficial, enabling them to keep in contact with the workplace if they were called away. It was suggested to the managers that current literature describes how technology has resulted in managers and/or employees being contactable at all hours of the day, and that this has increased managers' stress levels. Managers did not agree, indicating that they accept this as part of the responsibility of their positions.

All participants indicated that they were able to access some type of workplace flexibility to meet personal needs. They also accepted that at times, because of work activities or deadlines, flexible options were limited. Managing work-life balance

through flexible work arrangements was supported by all participants, with the proviso that it did not impact negatively on co-workers. Several participants stated that support for them to manage work-life balance included current health-and-wellbeing programs, employee assistance programs and a range of informal and formal leave arrangements.

Work-life balance findings varied, and indicate a need for Agencies to invest in further research and development of appropriate policies and practices. This is because of a number of different factors: the variation in employee, manager and agency views as to what work-life balance is and how work-life balance differs for different age groups and personal circumstances, for example, caring responsibilities. There was general agreement that work-life balance is important for engagement and retention and that it contributes strongly to productivity. Work-life balance is an inherent component of the employment relationship and participants highlighted its need and importance across the themes of attraction, engagement and retention.

There would appear to be a range of formal Agency policies and practices aimed at assisting employees' work-life balance. However, the research has identified that informal measures that contribute to employees' work-life balance are essential and valuable and contribute to employee attraction, engagement and retention. However, these policies do not appear to be measured or evaluated for their effectiveness and contribution to attraction, engagement and retention by Agencies in a structured manner.

## **7.6 Generational or inter-generational workforces**

Participants were asked about their experience in working with different age groups. The researcher wanted to gain a better understanding of employees' experiences and perceptions regarding different age groups, i.e. whether they held different expectations about working with or for people of different age groups. For E7:

*Generation X and Y are 'strange beasts' but at the end of the day they still need the basic requirements of all things that we get access now. They may interpret things a little bit differently but if they do the job then will probably get greater rewards than we got. There are a number of benefits to be gained from having different ages in the workplace and that we shouldn't view people according to their age but for the work that they do.*

E17 commented that when she first started work there were people in her work area old enough to be her grandmother, and treated her as a child:

*They wouldn't explain anything to me and would go to my manager and say that so-and-so hasn't done well. But after two years I had gained some respect. For me it was just a generational thing and if I were in my 50s and some young whipper-snapper came in and started doing a job I did previously, I would feel uncomfortable too, and I can see both sides.*

Attitudinal differences between the generational groups was commented on by E18 (under 30 years of age), who stated '*...younger people want more change and the ability to take time off, and that the other groups should just accept this*'. Other participants supported the need for flexibility in the workplace, for workplace decisions to be fair and equitable and decisions being equitable for everyone, citing situations where they had seen individuals receiving what they believed was preferential treatment.

E14 spoke at length about his views on different generational groups and that the stereotypes applied were usually wrong or taken out of context. He believed that younger age groups have different expectations, and see job security as something that they can use to their benefit rather than as an exchange or reciprocal arrangement within their employment. He acknowledged, however, that younger people who have not been in the workforce as long as others have different experiences that will lead to different expectations.

E19 stated that one can see differences between generational groups in the way they approach their work and their different attitudes, and that this is the variety that would be found in any group of people of different ages and personalities. E12 commented that there are different motivators for the different generations and that an organisation needs to be flexible enough to accommodate them, which may be a challenge for some managers and organisations. E12 considered that performance management may need to be different for different age groups, and managers should recognise the need to keep people interested in what they're doing and to move them into different roles when needed.

E17 worked with people who have children and grandchildren, and accepted that there must be flexibility; it does become a problem with some people having leave booked three years ahead. This is a point of frustration for E17, who believed that managers need to be proactive and address this equitably.

Enhanced people-management might entail different terms and conditions of employment for different groups. According to E16, '*it seems that there is a great range of people in the workforce, and older people are unable to retire because of financial*

*issues, while younger people are driven by different reasons and expectations for work and, on top of that, there are always different personalities'. In a previous position, E16 considered taking leave without pay but didn't because there was a view that a person would not be taken seriously about their career or would find themselves redundant: 'This was at a time when work was hard to find. Young people today seem very different in that they don't seem too worried about getting another job if they need to; they don't seem to be stressed. If the work doesn't suit them and they are unhappy, they go. E16 considered it good that younger workers have the courage and drive to go somewhere else, but the organisation loses a lot of knowledge when people leave.*

E18 believed that, regardless of age, if one wants to take a year off one should be able to do it. E20 agreed, saying that, given the current age issues, the organisation needs to look at having better flexibility to retain people. E20 didn't believe that having separate terms or conditions of employment was necessary, but observed that different age groups approach their work differently and therefore have different requirements.

E20 remarked that workplaces need better people-management that is fair and equitable, and where tensions relating to age differences are addressed, rather than ignored and that some differences provided benefits but could also create tension. E17 stated that it would be unfair to have different terms and conditions of employment for people based on age and didn't agree with the statement in some articles she had read which stated that her generation is lazy, that they want to earn \$70,000 per year and have unlimited Internet access. For E17, *'... one works one's hours and one gets leave one's entitled to, and you shouldn't be treated differently because of age or having a different level of experience; nor should younger people have accelerated development, but they should have respect that is earned'.*

E16 held that separate terms and conditions of employment for different age groups would make it difficult for one group over another and are not warranted. E16 experienced differences between the generations in regards to their outlook about her work, noting that the younger workers are very open to change and to expressing their feelings, and are comfortable in approaching management, whereas older people are more hesitant to do so. E16 acknowledged that there are tensions between different age groups that may warrant having same-age groups working together rather than having ongoing tension and poor performance, but that good management should limit the negative impact of different age groups working together.

There appears to be a level of understanding amongst participants that there are different needs, motivators and personality types in any workplace, which will sometimes require different forms of management and work organisation. A common comment also concerned the needs for sound people-management practices, flexible work arrangements and, more importantly, the need for consistency and equity regarding decisions in meeting different employees' needs. The view was clearly expressed that there is a need to meet individual requirements, but also to understand that the organisation needs to have work done.

The majority of the participants in the research were aware of questions arising from having different age groups in the workforce. Some participants noted differences between different age groups' approaches to their work and also in relation to the types of flexible work arrangements and development opportunities that should be available to different or specific age groups. A number of participants indicated that there should be separate arrangements and policies for specific age groups, in that organisations should provide different remuneration for young people or locate similarly-aged people together.

However, the majority of employees and managers interviewed acknowledged that there are different drivers for individuals in employment matters, but said that the organisation needs to address all needs on a fair and equitable basis. Differences may relate to life stage or personal choice but should not be confined by a narrow view of specific age group, personal circumstances or occupational level. This group held that every person should be able to ask, for example, for flexitime, and that a decision about this should be made fairly, communicated well and made considering others and the needs of the organisation.

At the organisational level, Agencies were able to demonstrate a range of policies and practices that are not age-specific. With preliminary activities around workforce planning, determining engagement factors and the need to have better practices and policies aimed at retaining the 'right' people, there appears to be recognition by Agencies of the need to address the needs of all employees, regardless of age.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

Employees' views about their employment highlighted the differences between their perceptions, both about their own and their colleagues' employment. They accepted the importance of organisational requirements as an important consideration for managers when granting leave and changes to work patterns. Some participants had

very firm interpretations of the meanings and benefits of work. The questions relating to older employees and their retirement potential and post-retirement work found that many employees in this group had not adopted a proactive approach to preparing for retirement or post-retirement work options.

What was consistent for employees and managers was the need for interesting work, a good team and work environment, and the ability to have manageable work challenges. Work arrangements appeared to meet the majority of participants' needs. The importance of managers maintaining a good environment was also stressed and participants identified the need for equitable decision-making about workplace matters.

Managers showed a level of understanding and insight into employees' needs, and also noted the limitations experienced by themselves and employees in regards to employment terms and conditions determined primarily by legislation and organisational directions. Managers identified interesting work, a good work environment and equitable decision-making as important for employees' engagement, attraction and retention.

Agencies, through the survey, indicated that there is some degree of preparedness for recruitment, engagement and retention in challenging environments, with several Agencies taking action beyond the prescriptive whole-of-service framework to meet workforce challenges. This was evident through the development of survey tools to gain a better understanding of employee needs, development and training of managers in workplace management and leadership, through to specific programs aimed at hard-to-fill vacancies.

Work-life balance provisions and access to flexible work arrangements for employees was found to be important for engagement and retention purposes. Agencies did not identify the different levels and types of informal arrangements or how these arrangements contributed to attraction, engagement and retention. Agencies were aware of the need to attract, engage and retain employees in order to sustain workforce capability and productivity.

The next chapter will discuss the research findings and will provide a synopsis of the findings in light of the reviewed literature and theories. The research findings will be discussed in respect of public sector workforce management, theoretical approaches and the contributions of the research to practice and theory. The parameters of the research (strengths and limitations) will also be detailed.





## **Chapter 8 Discussion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This final chapter brings together the key findings of the research and interprets these findings in light of the literature, themes and theoretical framework. The discussion examines the degree of alignment across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations. This chapter explains the meanings and significance of the research findings and how this research contributes to both theory and practice. It details the strengths and limitations of the research and suggests directions for future research in this field. This chapter therefore places the key findings of the research with the literature and suggests how the findings may result in re-thinking how employment perceptions are considered and evaluated and, in turn, whether there is an alignment of workforce management practices and policies that meet employee and organisational needs. The discussion provided in this chapter is drawn from theoretical and contemporary research writings and, as such, will not re-state the content but will note where it relates to the research findings. To that extent, the chapter will show how this research extends our understanding of the importance of employment relationships, the expectations held of employees and managers and how these align with organisational perspectives, practices and policies.

### **8.2 Findings—summary and discussion**

The intention of the research was to identify the degree of alignment between workplace policies and practices across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations. The research questions were:

1. What attraction, engagement and retention factors do employees perceive as being valuable? Do these factors vary depending on employee age?
2. What do managers believe their employees value about their employment in terms of attraction, engagement and retention?
3. Which attraction, engagement and retention factors are evidenced in Agency HR policies and practices?

The following summary is presented against these research questions and describes the overall intention of the research, that is, whether there is an alignment between workplace policies and practices across the three research groups. Each section will detail and discuss the research findings described at length in Chapter 7 in light of the literature and theory provided in this thesis.

### 8.2.1 Research findings—employees

Research question 1: What attraction, engagement and retention factors do employees perceive as being valuable?

The research identified a number of factors employees found valuable, many of which were related to the themes of attraction, engagement and retention. Employees stated that job security was a major attractor in applying for state service positions, was important for the initial attraction phase and continued into the engagement and retention phases. Attractive conditions of employment (reasonable salary, hours and days of work, flexible working arrangements and personal leave) were also important. Employees who had worked outside the public sector foresaw that public sector employment would involve less stress and a steadier workload, and that their entitlements would not be taken away from them. It is evident that entitlements were important employee factors relating to job security.

Having opportunities for career advancement, interesting and challenging work, contributing something of benefit to the community and being able to manage work-life balance were all indicated as valuable attraction factors. The prospect of having good working relationships was also found to be a strong attractor.

Working to help the community and making a difference, working with good people, learning new skills and having pride in work were found to be strong factors for positive attraction and engagement. Most participants found it rewarding to have varied job tasks and in being able to achieve outcomes, either singularly or in a team, which encouraged them to keep on trying to achieve something positive that had real effects. Some participants found that being able to be creative or innovative contributed to their levels of engagement, whereas other participants saw that this wasn't a required part of their role, as they worked in legal or compliance areas. Having job stability and opportunities to participate in training and development were valued across all age groups but, as noted in the next section, there were individual differences in how job security and access to, or provisions regarding, training and development were regarded.

Competitive salaries weren't found to be a key engagement factor, but having good people to work with and access to flexible working arrangements was identified by all participants. However, competitive salaries were noted as a key factor by Towers Perrin (2003) and Sayers (2006). All employee participants identified the importance of accessing flexible work as a key component for their work-life balance. The concept of

what work-life balance is and means drew varied responses from participants but there was agreement that it was about being able to meet work and personal needs at the individual level. Fairness and equity in how flexible work arrangements were provided and communicated to the work group by managers were important to employees. Flexible work was a key contributor to engagement for employees, which was noted especially in terms of *ad hoc* or informal arrangements they were able to access in the workplace. Participants saw informally-provided flexible work arrangements as a key contributor to engagement levels, in that they formed part of their relationships with their managers. Being able to use informal practices also enabled their managers to acknowledge the value of their work. This also extended to an acceptance of reciprocal arrangements: employees being available in periods of high work load or looming work deadlines. Participants held that if these informal arrangements were to become more formal, they would lose their value.

Working with a good team of people was found to be a valuable contributor to employee engagement and led them to try harder and to try doing things beyond their normal activities. This, along with job autonomy, was also perceived as valuable to their levels of engagement.

Many of the retention factors identified by the participants were already noted as attraction and engagement factors. Views about remaining in the state service were based on the ability to continue to do interesting and challenging work and access training and development opportunities (as they found individually important) for their current and future positions. Teamwork was an important factor in deciding to remain, along with good leave and flexible work arrangements. Some employees saw the question of workload as a factor that would make them reconsider continuing their employment, however, the research data found that this was a contributing factor to their overall decision, not one that would be considered in isolation.

Participants noted continued support and encouragement from co-workers and their managers as a valuable factor in maintaining their current employment. They identified a range of flexible work provisions but did not extend this beyond their current formal or informal arrangements. The prospect of having elder-care responsibilities currently or into the future, and how flexible work arrangements may be needed to meet this need, were not strongly identified by the participants.

Research question 1A: Do the attraction, engagement and retention factors that employees perceive as being valuable vary with employee age?
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Older employees viewed the question of retirement in terms of considering whether to continue working, their level of enjoyment, job satisfaction and making a worthwhile contribution being key factors in their decision to remain. This is therefore a strong factor when considering effective policies and practices for employee retention. Retirement will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. A number of older participants foresaw the ability to downshift as an important retention factor for them, or moving into less demanding work if the workload became unmanageable.

Having ongoing challenging and interesting work was identified by all participants as important to continuing their employment. Most participants accepted that their work would change because of changing service or policy directions, or technology changes; but the proviso was that whilst they enjoyed the work, had a good team of people, access to flexible work and a range of leave entitlements, they foresaw that they would continue in their employment.

Job security was seen as valuable to employees, regardless of age. There was a noted difference in how they perceived what job security meant, and this did vary according to age. Older employees saw job security as an expectation of ongoing employment that would provide them with an income to meet their personal requirements, and that would continue to be worthwhile and challenging. They believed in reciprocity: the employee would work hard for the organisation and the organisation would provide interesting and challenging work which, in turn, would make a real difference to the community. Older employees saw this as an ongoing commitment by both parties. However, older employees perceived that younger employees wouldn't necessarily want this type of arrangement, given that they perceived that young employees held different aspirations about their personal and working lives.

Younger employees similarly saw job security as a reciprocal relationship, but as a long-term agreement with a built-in proviso that the employee would be allowed to take time away from the workplace or organisation to pursue other activities including study, travel or to care for children. They saw benefits in having periods away from work and that there was a benefit to the organisation to allow them these periods of leave, as they would return with new levels of enthusiasm and new skills and knowledge. There was an expectation that they would return from leave and be provided with opportunities to undertake new duties that would also contribute to their ongoing development. Younger participants saw working for one organisation for a long period

of time, without a break, to be antiquated and that they couldn't consider working forever in the same position. Their concept of job security meant periods of working for the organisation interspersed with periods of time to pursue other personal or career development interests.

This way of thinking was not considered to be part of job security, or the employment contract, by older employees; however, leave for family reasons was seen as something that an organisation provided once you had been there a while and had contributed to the organisation, and it was then a given entitlement. Older employees saw consistency by both parties (in regards to work entitlements, conditions, work expected, training and development) making up their concept of job security.

Another factor that the research found to vary according to employee age related to expectations when applying for state service positions: younger employees believed strongly that the organisation would provide a high level of training and development. This belief was based on the view that it is in the organisation's best interest to continually develop their knowledge and skills. Older employees did not see this as being a 'must' attractor, but expected that the organisation would provide training and development in order for them to do their jobs well.

The research data concerning flexible work arrangements did not vary greatly according to employee age. There was a consistent view that flexible work arrangements are important to engagement across all age groups. No age-based differences were noted regarding the need for good team values or to have good managers who supported them and their training and development needs. One difference, however, was that the training and development desired and the level of importance ascribed to this varied according to age. Older employees saw less value in training and development, possibly because of their already acquired skills and/or experience. Older employees were not adverse to training or development, but they saw the need for such activities to be directly related to their current scope of duties and responsibilities. Younger employees saw training and development as an integral component of their employment relationship that was essential for their own self-development and also beneficial to the organisation. The notion of continuous learning was identified by both younger and older employees, but varied in form: younger employees wanted a planned development program, whereas older employees saw training and development to be more directly related to the duties and responsibilities of their current employment.

Similarly to younger employees, older employees saw flexible work as an important engagement factor. However, the reasons for accessing flexible work arrangements that supported work-life balance differed slightly according to age. Younger employees saw that flexible arrangements should be accessed for a wider range of reasons than caring for children or older family members or to be able to go to personal appointments, which were predominantly the reasons indicated by older employees. Younger people wanted these arrangements in order to pursue other interests such as recreational or cultural activities or to spend time with friends. Flexible arrangements to meet study commitments were acknowledged as being valid by all employees.

A further difference in employees' perceptions about engagement related to their perception of what constitutes interesting and challenging work. This varied with the actual role and duties undertaken. Given the diverse range of occupations, organisational activities and work undertaken, employee perceptions varied with length in the current job, qualifications and whether work is perceived as contributing to something worthwhile. Older employees perceived the value of their work to be more related to the contribution it makes to the community and in seeing the difference that their work makes. Younger employees saw work that involves new tasks and extending their knowledge as being valuable, in that it is interesting and challenging to them.

The key factors for retention found in the research data were again consistent across the different age groups. The importance assigned to interesting and challenging work was noted across the age groups, but its application and meaning varied according to age. Older employees who had worked for the service for a long time saw that they had an investment in their work and organisation and had seen changes because of their efforts; they similarly wished to continue to do something valuable that contributes to the community. Younger employees saw interesting and challenging work as a retention factor and that the organisation should meet this need for by providing ongoing opportunities for training and development, career pathways and the ability to take extended periods of leave. Access to, and the types of, flexible work arrangements differed according to age; however, the value of these arrangements did not vary by age or how they contributed to ongoing employment expectations.

#### **8.2.1.1 Discussion of findings—employees**

One of the elements noted from the research was the notion and importance of job security. The findings concur with Worrall, Cooper and Campbell-Jamison (2000) in that public sector employees held long-term job security as more important than higher salaries. Job security was noted as being important across all the themes of attraction,

engagement and retention, yet the literature tends to consider job security in relation to one theme only. SSA-Vic (2008) considered job security as it related to job satisfaction; Loretto, Vickerstaff & White (2005) and Westacott (2007) considered it in terms of retention. Towers Perrin (2003) and Sayers (2006) did not identify it across the spheres of attraction, engagement or retention, possibly because their research was undertaken outside of the public sector sphere.

The literature identified that public sector employment could be considered as a 'job for life' (Mercer Australia, 2008; Ogle, 2009). While the 'job for life' expectation may not be as significant as it once was, participants strongly held the view that job security was an important attractor. As noted in the findings chapter, the expectation of a job for life was not supported by all participants, regardless of age, occupational level or employment category. What varied was how individuals understood the concept of job security. The majority (11 of 13) of older participants held the more traditional understanding that there was a long-term or ongoing expectation of employment stability: that their employment would continue with similar remuneration and employment conditions. Younger participants agreed, but added the expectation (or an unwritten agreement) that they would be supported by the organisation in having periods away from the workplace to pursue study or other interests and then return later to a similar position or one that would allow them to use their newly gained skills or knowledge. This finding differs from those of Towers Perrin (2003) and Sayers (2006) but concurs with research from other public sectors (Vic-SSA, 2005; APSC, 2006). Therefore, job security is understood differently by employees. This research has highlighted the need for organisations to better understand job security considering the level of importance placed on it by the participants and the literature

Another research finding strongly indicated as an attractor across the research themes of attraction, engagement and retention was the importance placed on doing work that contributes to something worthwhile or of value to the community. Buelens and Van den Broeck (2007) and Worrall, Cooper and Campbell-Jamison (2000) found this in respect of public sector employment. DEWR (2005) and the Office of Public Employment, (2004) noted this in their research about older employees and their retirement decisions. As research strongly evidenced this aspect as important for attraction, engagement and retention and particularly important in the public sector, as noted in the literature, it should be a strong component in public sector employment policies and practices.

Towers Perrin (2003), SSA-Vic (2005), APSC (2006) and Sayers (2006) identified that career advancement, autonomy in decision-making, collaboration, resources to do the job, input into decision-making, senior management interest in employees' work, senior management vision and challenging work were important engagement factors. The research also found that the strongest elements in attraction were also related to engagement, but the literature tends to treat these identified factors in isolation. But, as noted by Kular et al (2009) and Macey and Schneider (2009), engagement has different definitions, and each study will examine engagement under a different protocol. However, links to engagement are still being researched and understood from both the individual and organisational perspectives, and research itself takes a broad approach by incorporating the duties undertaken, relationships at work, remuneration, workplace culture and flexibility (Pitt-Catsouphes & Matz-Costa, 2008). There does appear to be a need to take a more holistic view across the employment cycle of how matters important to attraction then translate to engagement and attraction.

What the research did find as important to engagement was relationships between employees and their managers and co-workers. This finding concurs with those of Kular et al (2008), Sayers (2006) and Towers Perrin (2008a). This was important both for being able to access flexible work (formally or informally) and even more than that, employees believed their managers supported them in their work. Employees appreciated having challenging work that contributed to community, and the ways their managers acknowledged this was a valuable component of their levels of engagement.

The research participants were able to describe the importance of having access to flexible work arrangements, and in doing so, being able to maintain or to improve their work-life balance. This was an important engagement factor for employees, as found by Bourke and Russell (2009) and Hayman (2009). Older employees were openly supportive of younger people needing flexible arrangements in order to care for children, but did not themselves identify a need for flexible arrangements in order to care for elderly dependents or as a way of increasing their own personal work-life balance. Participants, regardless of age, indicated a strong level of support for flexible work arrangements, acknowledging the need to still meet work requirements and demands. The need for equitable decision-making was strongly evidenced in the interviews with employees and managers, but was not as strongly evident in the policies or guidelines. The concept of fairness and equality in decision-making is considered important to the psychological contract, as noted by Hecker and Grimmer (2006, p. 202). The literature did not find this as a key aspect when looking across attraction, engagement and retention, although Managing Work/Life Balance



International (2005) and Haar and Bardoel (2008) noted it when discussing work-life balance.

Participants also noted that their levels of engagement were more influenced by their direct managers than senior management. The research found that the participants strongly believed in the work they were doing and in achieving organisational goals, but were more guided and supported by the direct and local senior management, rather than more senior divisional heads or Heads of Agencies. Other research has also identified the relationship between employees and their direct managers as a critical factor for engagement (Bardoel, 2006; AHRI, 2009).

Towers Perrin (2003) and Sayers (2006) found that career advancement, work environment, challenging work, supportive managers, competitive pay and skills development were the main retention factors. These authors sought to understand retention aspects across a broad range of occupations and industry sectors. Similar findings for public sector organisations were noted by APSC (2006) and SSA-Vic (2005). This research found similar results, although competitive pay was not an important factor. This research also found many aspects noted as retention factors to be important to engagement and attraction. These research findings align with many of the findings of Towers Perrin (2003), SSA-Vic (2005), Sayers (2006), APSC (2006) and Toten (2006). However, workforce provisions relating to retention are complex and, given organisational demands and requirements, labour market competition and employees' needs, is not an area where a static or one-fits-all approach can be adopted.

The importance that employees placed on informal practices was clear. The surprising aspect was that employees held this as being very important to their engagement and retention. All age and occupational groups valued informal practices, relating them to their levels of job satisfaction, meeting work/life balance needs and as direct factors in their relationships with their managers. The participants held that they did not want to see these arrangements formalised, as they would lose their appeal. Bourke (2000) noted the difficulties in measuring informal and formal practices and, as identified by Toten (2006), there are formal and informal provisions that could be required once, several times or continuously. However, the literature and research is limited in its ability to identify patterns or the use of the different types of provisions. This research has identified the importance given to informal practices by employees and managers and the need to better understand them in terms of attraction, engagement and retention and how they are addressed at the organisational level.

The research found that many employees approaching the minimum retirement age are unsure of their retirement intentions or plans, but entering retirement was not age-based alone, but related to a number of factors. This was an unexpected finding. It was noted by Shacklock (2005), Cobb-Clark and Stillman (2006), Jackson et al (2006) and Warren, (2008), but their research was across a number of different industry groups. It was anticipated that in the public sector, employees would have had firmer retirement plans; given the job security factor and that the research participants had relatively long service lengths. The research also highlighted that retirement planning support from organisations and managers was not evident. The role of organisations and managers in this regard was not evidenced in the research and, given the ageing of the workforce, will require a different approach.

The research findings support the view that the financial implication of retirement appears for most to be difficult to identify or quantify as a dollar value, concurring with Shacklock, (2005), Rolland (2007) and AHRI (2009). Participants indicated that they want to be financially independent in retirement. More strongly evident was that this group of employees foresaw their retirement as being different from that of their parents or grandparents, involving a range of activities including travel, participation in community activities, undertaking study in areas of personal interest, selective post-retirement employment and supporting family.

The research concerning pre- and post-retirement employment was inconclusive: many of the participants had not considered it in detail or depth. None of the participants said that they wouldn't participate in work after retirement, but they were unsure of what type of work they would like to do (i.e. whether similar to their current roles or something completely different). More than two thirds of this group perceived retirement as something not on their immediate horizons because they were currently working and achieving something beyond financial gains for their retirement. This aspect, then, is one that links to engagement as well as retention, and additional research to ascertain the value of non-financial benefits would enhance organisational policies and practices, especially given the large cohort of older employees found in many public sector organisations.

Whilst a number of older participants were aware of phased-in retirement options, there was little awareness of how they could discuss or approach this at their workplaces, and they had found little organisational support in this regard. This group indicated that they would like such information, but in this research there was little evidence that the Agencies involved are adopting a proactive stance. While there is a phased-in

retirement scheme in place, a range of formal flexible work provisions, including purchased leave, and evidence of informal flexible arrangements that are used inconsistently across organisations, many employees are unsure of the range of options available to them.

In this respect the research findings were similar to many presented in the literature. Loretto, Vickerstaff and White (2005), Cobb-Clark and Stillman (2006), Rolland (2007a), and Warren (2008) support that management of mature-age employees requires a more flexible approach to how work is done, how employees are managed and how engagement and retention policies and practices for this group will play a large role in determining future organisational capability and viability. Workforce management of older workers will be critical for workforce sustainability (ABS, 2007e; Faoro, 2008; Shacklock, 2009) and the research has highlighted the need for a more holistic approach to this.

The research undertook to identify whether there were significant differences in how employees of different age groups perceived their employment. To some degree the research findings were consistent with a number of the generational differences identified in the literature. Some of the views held and suggestions made in the literature, however, draw sweeping conclusions and, at times, use generic labels or stereotypes to summarise a large number of views into neat conclusions. Conclusions are then used to make broad or sweeping suggestions or recommendations aimed at audiences mainly consisting of managers and employees. The suggestions from Henry (2004), Faoro (2008), and AHRI (2008) indicated that the different generations in the workplace need different management practices and workforce policies, extending from work organisation and team composition to terms and conditions of employment. This was not found to be at such a level of importance to employees and managers, however, respect for individual needs and differences was acknowledged and accepted at the workplace level. Similar to Jurkiewicz (2000) and Kirkpatrick, Martin and Warneke (2008), the research found that there was a consistent pattern to what employees valued about their work and that where differences were found, based on age, they were more related to the life stage of the individual and did not impact on the value of doing a good job.

The research found that the age differences espoused in the literature may not, in fact, be revolutionary but evolutionary, given the changes in society, changing lifestyles and increasing longevity. The expectations held across age groups are, on the whole, similar: interesting jobs, making valued and recognised contributions and having

development and career opportunities. Additional changes have been the increased role of women in the workforce, participation in tertiary study and having the ability to take leave for family reasons. Equal opportunity has emerged during this time, resulting in males changing work arrangements to meet these different needs, including different family responsibilities and roles. With this level and type of diversity drivers, the needs of employees and employers will continue to change with changes to industries, markets and family patterns and roles. The resulting changes to work conditions and arrangements will continue, impelling adaptations to organisational approaches, as noted by Jurkiewicz (1997), Kramar (2004), Deal (2007) and Kirkpatrick, Martin and Warneke (2008).

Overall, the research confirms the complexity of the employment relationship, how employee views need to be considered in determining organisational policies and even how HR policies and practices are developed, managed and evaluated in terms of alignment with organisational goals.

### **8.2.2 Research findings—managers**

Research question 2: What do managers believe their employees value about their employment in terms of attraction, engagement and retention?

Managers demonstrated a level of understanding regarding their employees' perceptions about attraction, engagement and retention that were reasonably well aligned with the research data about employee perceptions. First and foremost, managers identified the importance of job security and how this is a strong attractor for employees. Managers demonstrated an awareness that employees were attracted to work for an organisation that offered job security, that involved interesting work and that paid a good salary. Managers also identified that potential employees value the importance of being able to access training and development, a range of leave provisions adequate to meet their personal needs and a fair and supportive workplace.

Managers' own perceptions about attraction included the assertion that being able to offer attractive conditions and a good working environment were essential to attract the right people. The concept of job security was identified by managers as important to employees and that the public sector provided more stable employment, which in itself was an attractor. Managers believed that the reputation of the Agency played an important role in attracting potential employees, though this wasn't strongly identified by employees. This may be in part because the managers who participated in the research were long-term employees who held their Agencies in high regard. Managers'

views about employee perceptions were also found to be similar with regards to being able to access flexible working arrangements and how these arrangements supported employees' work-life balance. Leadership was seen by managers as an important attraction factor, that is, having well-led and responsive organisations that encourage people to want to work for their organisations.

There was no variation in what managers believed fixed-term and permanent employees valued in terms of attraction. However, managers did identify that fixed-term employees were attracted by challenging work or work that was interesting, and in some cases related to the individual's experience and qualification. Fixed-term employees were also believed by managers to accept the short duration of the offered employment with a view to gaining either permanent employment or further fixed-term employment, whilst increasing their levels of skills or knowledge. This wasn't identified as an attraction factor by the fixed-term employee participants.

Managers noted that the prescribed application and selection processes may be a deterrent to potential employees. Not being able to offer above-award conditions was also perceived by managers to inhibit the attraction of suitable applicants. This wasn't raised by employees, but managers believed that these concerns were overcome by being able to offer other benefits including job security, structured work and hours, access to work-life provisions and training and development.

With regards to engagement, managers were able to describe what they believed their employees valued and how engagement was related to individuals and their sense of job satisfaction. Managers were able to identify that employees value interesting and challenging work, being able to see a difference their work makes within the workplace and in the wider community, and having a good team to work with. Additionally, strongly engaged employees also held the ability to achieve a good work-life balance through leave and flexible work arrangements to be important. Managers identified the range of formal and informal flexible work arrangements in place and the challenges they faced in managing the requirements of the organisation and individuals. Managers viewed flexible work arrangements as an important component for employee engagement and to meet organisational requirements.

Managers also acknowledged the importance of employees wanting to diversify their skills and knowledge, to try new things and to have access to training and career development. The research data show that managers are cognisant of the importance of a supportive work environment and good working relationships with co-workers; that this is important to employee engagement and retention at the individual and

organisational levels. Managers also recognised that their communication with their sections, their management style and their preparedness to allow employees autonomy in doing their work are important factors in employee engagement.

Managers identified that employee perceptions regarding retention related to many of the factors identified within the attraction and engagement spheres. The research data reveal that managers were aware that employees value the ability to have flexible work arrangements, access to training and development, career pathways and ongoing interesting and challenging work. A manageable workload was also noted by managers as being important to employees and that there is a reciprocal arrangement where, during periods of lighter workload, more flexibility is possible and that during periods of high workload, flexible arrangements need to be considered in light of the individual and organisational need.

Managers perceived that having informal practices to address employee needs for flexible work arrangements was an important retention and engagement factor for employees. Managers noted the issues surrounding ageing workforces and that additional flexibility and approaches to retaining older workers will be required. Managers were, however, limited in discussing what they believed older employees needed in making retirement plans and decisions, hesitating to state what working arrangements they thought employees would value pre- or post-retirement. Though a number of managers did not believe that remuneration or employment conditions needed to change in light of this, they held that there are critical occupations (for example, engineers and specialised health professionals) that may require additional resources to maintain organisational capability.

Managers held different views regarding employee perspectives about the employment terms and conditions needed to ensure that organisations could retain their employees. Some of the differences between manager and employee perceptions could be related to individual preferences or managers' beliefs that there are limited options available for engagement or retention beyond those currently provided. Managers did indicate that there will need to be ongoing flexible work arrangements, changes to management approaches to work allocation and changes to work patterns in order to retain employees. Managers held that informal flexible work arrangements were important and of value to employees, and will need to continue in order to meet employee needs and achieve workforce engagement and retention.

### **8.2.2.1 Discussion of findings—managers**

Managers did appear to have a good awareness and understanding of how employees perceived their employment and how their employment conditions impacted on their attraction, engagement and retention. It was less evident how managers saw these in terms of formal organisational policies and practices. This was evidenced in the level of importance that managers placed on their employees and their own views regarding informal practices used to meet employee needs.

Managers held that informal arrangements were part of their toolkit, and enabled them to meet and match employee and organisational needs. Managers also expressed that if these informal practices were to become formal policies, they would lose their appeal to both managers and employees, because they would require formal application and approval procedures, which also take time. The research found that managers understood that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach of formal HR policies and practices does not provide sufficient flexibility to meet employee needs. This accords with Neal, Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton, Emlen and Boise (1990) and Duxbury and Higgins (2008), who found that informal arrangements can be considered as a bridge between the employee and the organisation. It is a bridge that managers note provides them with ability to get the best outcomes for employees (both at the practical day-to-day level and one that contributes to employee engagement and retention), whilst obtaining the best productivity outcomes for the organisation.

The research found that not all managers had received training and development about managing employees or about the range of leave and flexible working arrangements and entitlements, including how they should be applied in practice. When asked about dealing with numerous requests for flexibility in work arrangements, managers could not stipulate how they consistently applied equity to their decision-making about which requests to approve. There was no indication of any ongoing manager training, awareness or skills development across all Agencies, though several did indicate a top-down leadership approach and occasions when section managers or a division met to discuss workforce management or planning. The managers interviewed gave mixed responses as to how they approached or managed workforce issues such as leave approvals and requests for flexible work arrangements, and only a few mentioned that they would seek advice or support from their HR sections. This does not accord with the literature in terms of having appropriate HR training and support for managers (the Office of Public Employment-Victoria, 2004; SSA-Vic, 2005; Calderon, 2009).

Managers identified a number of factors that they believed employees would consider about their retirement, but were limited in understanding what would affect employee decisions to retire. A number of managers held that their older employees had not made firm or even preliminary retirement plans, an aspect noted by the ABS (2007b) and Connors (2007). There appeared to be a minimal and selective approach to discussing retirement options with older employees. Some managers and employees indicated that the onus is on the employee to instigate this, or that there is no direction or guidance from their HR sections on how to support or manage employees regarding their retirement decisions. There was some indication by managers that they did not think their employees had considered their retirement decisions, which agrees with the findings of Shacklock (2005), Cobb-Clark and Stillman (2006), Jackson et al (2006) and Warren (2008). Furthermore, managers believed that retirement was primarily based on individual choices (Jackson, Walter, Felmingham & Spinaze, 2006; Rolland, 2007; Shacklock, 2009). The alignment between employees and managers regarding retirement was unable to be determined, as there was little evidence of the level of discussion about the matter and how or what organisations should provide to support older employees in this regard. Managers, like employees, were not always aware of the range of leave provisions and work arrangements available at the organisational level, which was surprising to the researcher, given the level of importance placed on this by both.

Employees, managers and Agencies interpreted work-life balance differently. Whilst the literature also found this (Office of Public Employment, 2004; Parkes & Langford, 2008; Kalliath & Brough, 2009), this research considered the definitions from the individual, manager and employer perspectives, which was a different approach from those in the literature. Work-life balance also appears to hold different meanings and contexts, depending on individual preferences, position, and location of work, age and caring arrangements. However, work-life balance was generally perceived as individuals having a degree of control over their working and non-working patterns or arrangements. The work-life provisions available included both formal and informal arrangements. The research found a strong appreciation on the employees' part of having access to informal practices that supported their work-life balance. This aspect wasn't independently considered in the literature. However, participants stressed the importance of having access to flexible arrangements for work-life balance as a critical aspect for their engagement and retention. Employees strongly voiced the opinion that there is not one set of arrangements that will suit everyone; there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' policy. This is because of the different needs of individuals, as was found by SSA-



Vic (2005), Burke (2006), Bardoel, De Cieri and Santos (2008) and Yuile, Chang, Gudmundsson and Sawang (2012).

Employees understood that arrangements contributing to work-life balance needed to take into account operational requirements and demands. It was not clear how managers of work sections address requests for special work-life balance arrangements in view of operational requirements or in making fair and equitable decisions. The research did not identify through the Agency surveys or in interviews with managers how the application of work-life balance policies and practices address operational requirements and how decisions are equitably arrived at. The literature did, however, identify the gains for individuals and organisations in implementing and managing a range of flexible work arrangements (Bardoel, 2006; Abbott & De Cieri, 2008; Hill et al, 2008; Calderon, 2009).

Some managers and employees were able to describe a number of mainly temporary or *ad hoc* arrangements that they have provided or had access to. Managers also acknowledged that this was needed to maintain employee engagement and retention or to reward their contribution to the workplace. Employees saw this as being a means of meeting work-life balance needs and to be able to take a break from their work routine, acknowledged its informal nature and said that at times they would like to see it become more widespread and formalised. The Agency survey, while identifying a concern for meeting future workforce needs for flexibility, did not indicate a readiness to explore the range of other formal or informal flexible arrangements or acknowledge the need to ensure that their managers were informed and able to address employee needs in this regard.

Elder-care was also identified as having an impact on workforce arrangements which, in the coming years, will require workplaces to adopt different forms of flexible working arrangements to meet the needs of employees (Shoptaugh, Phelps & Visio, 2004; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008; Dobkin, 2009). Predicted elder-care needs will require organisations to adapt and provide additional flexibility if they require their workforces to stay and to be engaged (Neal, Chapman, Ingersoll-Dayton, Emlen & Boise, 1990; Duxbury & Higgins, 2008). Managers did identify that caring for older people would impact on their employees and how they would need a range of flexible work options to manage this effectively to continue to actively contribute to the workplace. However, there was limited evidence from participants that this was a current concern for them. Some participants (managers and employees) indicated that it would constitute a future concern, although participants were unable to articulate how this would equate to

needing flexible work arrangements. This was unexpected in light of its importance in the literature and the ageing population of the research setting.

### 8.2.3 Research findings—Agencies

Research question 3: Which attraction, engagement and retention factors are evidenced in Agency HR policies and practices?

The research data from the Agency survey stage show that Agencies are aware of the need and importance of attracting potential employees. The research data show that Agencies are starting to seek employee views about attraction by undertaking on-boarding employee surveys at a whole-of-service level to determine not only employee views about commencing their employment in the state service and Agency, but also what factors attracted them to apply for their positions. Agencies are revising their advertisements for positions and indicating a number of factors that are considered to be attractors. These include the ability to access training and development, interesting or challenging work and working in a progressive or supportive environment. Changes to Agency websites have also involved promoting their employee-value propositions and using images that display diverse job tasks, professional group or individual images, and images reflecting teamwork and people enjoying their work.

The surveys showed that Agencies have faced, and continue to face, challenges in attracting certain occupational groups, one aspect of which is the ability to exceed prescribed award or agreement conditions. To counter this, Agencies have undertaken targeted recruitment strategies to fill at-risk positions by offering structured development or career progression programs. The research also found that Agencies are aware of labour market challenges and demographic trends regarding the ageing of the workforce. To that extent there is evidence of Agencies seeking employee views through climate surveys to better identify the key attractors and using these in their branding and marketing activities.

Agencies reported that their reputations constitute a key attractor, and acknowledge that current employees talking about the positive aspects of their employment in the community is a valuable tool in attracting applicants. Current employees talking about their work with potential applicants, including the employment terms and conditions, provide an important medium to attract applicants to join the service. The findings also identified the level of importance Agencies now place on the diversity of the service and other positive aspects as attractors (such as occupational mobility, working in a beautiful environment, and working to assist the community). There appears to be an

increasing momentum to present Agencies as 'good employer's, not only in their vacancy advertisements but also in their corporate documents and on their websites. This is a change from accepting that they have limited resources to attract people and are constrained by the employment management requirements set in place by legislative directions and processes and, therefore, that they could not compete effectively in the labour market by offering higher salaries.

As noted in the previous chapter, Agencies are adopting a more affirmative approach to how they present their employment opportunities. This may be in response to a number of factors, including the public sector employment framework, the tightening of the labour market and the need for specific occupational skills and knowledge.

Employee engagement is derived from a range of factors that are related to the terms and conditions of employment, management styles and practices and how policies and practices relating to workforce management are designed, implemented and evaluated (Kular et al, 2008; Parkes & Langford, 2008; Pitt-Catsouphe & Matz-Costa, 2008; Brickner & Dettmann, 2009). The research data from the Agency surveys indicate that while there is Agency conformity with legislative guidelines and directions, Agencies are also aware of the importance of engagement at the organisational level and the need to understand and measure this in order to provide a good workplace and to sustain engagement levels to meet organisational requirements. There are a range of workplace policies that provide for flexible work arrangements, leave provisions, supported study and career development, phased-in retirement and leave without pay. These are all provided by a central or whole-of-service approach and are incorporated into many awards and agreements. However, individual Agencies are, for operational reasons, not always able to provide the same array of provisions. Several Agencies have also undertaken to develop a number of provisions for their own organisations to meet employee needs or occupational or skill shortages. This is still within the legal frameworks, guidelines and budgetary constraints. Strategies involving mentoring or coaching were deemed to be important for employees' attraction, engagement and retention and of benefit to the organisation.

Agencies' survey responses did not include sufficient information regarding the use or value of informal flexible work arrangements and did not indicate their importance for employee engagement or retention. Climate surveys have been used by some Agencies to analyse the factors that contribute to employee engagement. Whether the results of these surveys are used to inform workplace policies and practices could not be determined within the scope of the research, given their recent implementation.

However, management identified an increasing awareness of the need to address employee engagement for organisational sustainability and productivity.

The research findings identified that only one Agency was in the process of developing a retention strategy, and that no other strategies or policies existed at a whole-of-service or at an individual Agency level that directly addressed workforce retention. Evidence was found that a number of Agencies had what they perceived to be retention strategies involving the phased-in retirement program (which is centrally determined) and a succession plan in development. The survey responses identified future challenges for workforce sustainability and capability as a concern. Agencies noted the range of leave and flexible work provisions as important for the retention of their employees. No evidence was provided as to how, or whether, Agencies measured or evaluated the use of, or requirements for, their leave and flexible working provisions. Agencies, however, identified retention challenges because of skills shortages, labour market demands and the ageing of the workforce, and it would appear that Agencies are addressing the significance of these and developing retention.

To that extent, Agencies are drawing information from climate surveys and separation surveys to identify and understand how to retain their employees. Agencies have yet to address the problem of having the situation where a high percentage of employees may retire in the next five to ten years. However, there is evidence that organisations are offering pre- and post-retirement options to individuals who have specialised skills. This appears to be at the professional or senior levels, and on an individual level, and is not part of a formal policy. This information was provided by employees during the research rather than by Agencies in the survey responses. Given current reforms to reduce the size of the state service workforce, efforts to address retention have yet to be fully addressed within the Agency and at the whole-of-service policy level.

#### **8.2.3.1 Discussion of findings—Agencies**

The Agency workforce policies and practices identified in the research were, in the main, derived from collective agreements. Following their implementation, compliance with policies appears to be the accepted norm. There was minimal evidence of how these policies and practices are directly aligned with organisational goals. This did not fit with the literature and, as noted by Boxall (1993), the employment relationship can be analysed as a defining feature of HR and mutuality, the quality of alignment between business and employee interests should be understood as the extent to which the employment relationship works well for both parties. The importance of having good alignment between organisational goals and workforce management policies and

practices was noted by Wright and McMahan (1992), Kramar (2004), Ives (2005) and Boxall and Purcell (2008).

The survey findings did not disclose where employee perspectives or expectations were being addressed by the organisation in policy and practice terms. The findings of this stage of the research did not reveal how Agencies' workforce plans and strategies fitted with organisational goals. In the areas that Agencies did note their current and future challenges, there was minimal evidence that Agencies had considered the importance of identifying or understanding employee perceptions regarding their employment or how this information could inform their attraction, engagement and retention strategies. This counters the importance placed on the need to understand employee views as maintained by Gibb (2001) and Guest (2001, 2007) and Edgar and Geare (2003, 2005). The research did identify that Agencies are starting to approach this through the use of employee surveys, but how this information would be used to develop strategies or policies is yet to be determined.

The literature identified the need to assess employee engagement through the use of survey tools (Brickner & Dettmann, 2009; Kular et al, 2009). The research found that most Agencies had adopted or are in the process of implanting survey methods with which to measure employee engagement and satisfaction with work-life balance. The use of survey data to manage or inform HR policies and practices was not formally advised or measured. Therefore the survey mechanism itself is not enough as a comprehensive evaluation tool. Parkes and Langford (2008) and Pitt-Catsoupes and Matz-Costa (2008) stressed the need for survey instruments to include both quantitative and qualitative measures, but the research found that in practice only quantitative data were sought.

Alignment with Agency HR practices and policies that contributed to engagement was identified; however, this may be because Agencies have only recently initiated activities to measure engagement factors in their respective workforces. HR practices and policies did contain a range of award-based flexible work arrangements, but these are not specifically designed to address engagement factors. Of note is the value of informal arrangements remarked on by employees and managers, but this was not identified at the Agency level as either being available or contributing to employee engagement.

The alignment between employees, managers and Agencies regarding retention is only tenuous, although theory holds it to be important in achieving organisational objectives. The need for an alignment between HR policies and practices and organisational goals

was strongly supported by Wright and McMahan (1992); Kramar (2006a); Teo and Rodwell (2007) and Boxall and Purcell (2008). Again, many of the retention factors identified by employees were also noted by managers. Agencies identified that retention was a critical component for workforce sustainability, but minimal evidence emerged as to how Agencies viewed their employees' and managers' perceptions in this regard. This may suggest that managers and Agencies are missing opportunities to implement more effective retention strategies. Further, as Agencies appeared to have begun taking steps to implement retention strategies in light of workforce demographics, and with the introduction of employee surveys, the retention factors perceived as being valuable by employees and managers should become evident. The degree of fit may be more evident as this Agency activity matures its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The literature identified the importance of the capacity and capability of senior management and HR practitioners to deliver adaptive or flexible work arrangements (Jurkiewicz, 1997; Kramar, 2004; Kirkpatrick, Martin and Warneke, 2008). Though the research did find that employee perceptions about their manager's approach to workplace matters was a key element in their satisfaction about work, there was little evidence of consistent management approaches across Agencies or the sector for managing their employees

Flexibility in arrangements for working hours, the array of different types of leave provisions, salary arrangements, training and development opportunities and non-continuous periods of employment are parts of effective HR policies and practices to achieve an alignment between workforce with organisational goals (Toten, 2006; Bardoel, De Cieri & Mayson, 2008). The research identified that some of these factors were important but were in the main examined in relation to one employment element (for example, attraction). This research identified the importance of these factors for both engagement and retention. The literature did not specify in detail or in practical terms how an alignment or level of fit between the workforce policies and practices and organisational goals can be achieved.

The research found that the participating Agencies are aware of a number of the critical challenges to maintaining current and future workforce capability. Ageing populations, different generational beliefs and aspirations and the work-life balance needs of employees have all contributed to increasing employee demands or needs for flexible work arrangements beyond previously legislated or industrially-agreed leave arrangements, that is, maternity leave and simple flexible work arrangements. This is

supported in the literature by Edgar and Geare (2005), Bardoel (2006), Bardoel, De Cieri and Mayson, (2008) and Poelmans, Kalliath and Brough (2009). The research found that these aspects need to be thoroughly and strategically explored or addressed at Agency or whole-of-service level.

One of the strongest responses by Agencies regarding future challenges was the ability of organisations to meet the flexibility requirements of employees, while still meeting operational requirements. The Office of Public Employment-Victoria (2004) also found delineation between senior executives' views and those of their staff who use the policies with regard to flexible work arrangements. This research sought to understand how management actually delivers and implements workforce policies, as Agencies are bound to comply with legislated requirements as well as Commissioner and Ministerial Directions and industrial instruments, which provide for a wide range of employment terms and conditions. These were found not to be necessarily streamlined in respect of any particular issue, for example, leave, as there are many different types of leave. Provisions such as annual and parental leave are common across all Agencies, but the level of participation in phased-in retirement or purchased leave provisions was not included in the research. However, the research indicated that the level of promotion and support of these varies across Agencies. Approaches to formal flex-time or altered working hours or arrangements also differed across Agencies, not only in the level or style of promotion or awareness, implementation and management approaches, but also in their reporting procedures. This does not align with practitioner literature or theory, which hold that there should be a consistent and systematic approach to such matters (Wright & McMahan, 1992; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Poelmans, Kalliath & Brough, 2008; Boxall & Purcell, 2008).

#### **8.2.4 Alignment**

The intention of the research, to identify the degree of alignment between workplace policies and practices across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations, has been met. The previous sections have identified where an alignment was able to be demonstrated. The research has been able to identify where workplace provisions contribute to attraction, engagement and retention. However, the value or benefit of these provisions in relation to organisational goals is more difficult and complex in respect of the individual factors examined within the parameters of this research. Theory and practitioner literature regarding SHRM holds that there needs to be an alignment between organisational goals and workforce policies and practices (Boxall, 1998; Ives, 2005; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). Complete alignment between

organisational goals and workforce policies and practices is not possible. Workforce policies are derived from a number of sources, including award or agreement negotiations with unions and employees, legislative instruments and the boundaries and the directions from senior management. How policies translate into practice that will vary between organisations and involve different management styles and approaches. Employees' perceptions and values placed on organisational policies and practices will also vary. Therefore the organisational policies and practices that suit one employee will not necessarily suit another. However, understanding what employees hold as being valuable can then assist organisations to design their policies.

The complexity of public sector employment, with its legislated requirements, along with the array of collectively and centrally-driven policies, provides additional structural barriers to alignment. Employee and manager perspectives are not a direct part of evaluating the effectiveness of workforce policies and practices, and no formal framework currently exists for evaluating those policies and practices. Employee evaluation of workforce policies and practices is not undertaken by TSS Agencies and therefore any alignment based on current information would be arbitrary. There are areas of similarity and difference between the three research groups, but given the complexity of the employment relationship and organisational structures the ability to determine accordance is limited by the constraints of Agency self-evaluation practices and the varying understandings of employees about organisational policies and practices.

The research identified that employee perceptions about their terms and conditions of employment are not always related to the actual use of leave provisions and workplace arrangements. Workforce arrangements cannot be aligned to meet all individuals' needs at all times, and the use and types of leave and workplace arrangements will have lead and lag indicators. Such indicators are not always assessed and employee and organisational needs are not static but dynamic. Indeed the provisions of formal arrangements are not firm indicators in determining a formal alignment that is described in theory. Informal practices were found to be highly important for employees and managers and the contribution of these practices to engagement and retention was strongly identified in the research. This indicates a need to consider more closely the role of informal policies and practices in contributing to alignment.

The important role of line managers was also established in the research, in how line managers support employee needs and those of the organisation. The ability of line managers to use informal measures to meet both individual and organisational needs



was a strong finding of the research, as was their important role in supporting employee needs and those of the organisation. The research demonstrated that line managers use informal measures to meet and better align the needs of individuals and organisations. Line managers have the ability and capacity to use informal measures, which equate to employee engagement and retention, as has been found in this research. However, informal measures are not necessarily notified to senior management or HR and are therefore not considered within a formal alignment. Therefore, the notion of 'alignment' in having effective bundles of HR policies and practices that meet employee and organisational needs should be refined to include the use of informal policies and practices. Employee and organisational needs will always vary, and a close alignment is not a neat or clearly prescribed formula of policies and practices.

### **8.3 Key contributions of this thesis**

The following sections detail the key contributions of this research to practice and theory, and will identify how the findings contribute to each sphere. It is accepted that both spheres of theory and practice continue to develop in light of research and discussion, which is the context in which the following is discussed.

This thesis sought to analyse how workplace policies and practices meet the expectations of three research groups: employees, managers and organisations. The factors of attraction, engagement and retention, were not considered in isolation but in a broader context, to better understand the complexity of work and how these factors translate into organisational policy and practice. This research contributes to theoretical and practical understandings of HR in public sector organisations in that it identifies, contrasts and compares different public sector organisations in terms of their people-management and capacity to attract, engage and retain the right people. This research was not limited to one component, for example, an age group or occupational group, and it was not confined to eliciting information from only one source, for example, managers. This research contributes to literature and the ongoing development and understanding of theory by using a wider lens: studying attraction, engagement and retention from an employee, manager and organisational views. It contributes to understanding public sector HRM by identifying how employees perceive their employment and how the themes of attraction, engagement and retention need to be considered, drawing on employee views, in order to have sustainable and effective workforce management for public sector organisations.

### **8.3.1 Contributions and implications—practice**

At the practitioner level the research has demonstrated, first and foremost, the need for workforce practitioners to understand how practice and policy decisions occur in the workplace. The extent or type of HR policy and practices, and the way they are managed and communicated, all require consideration at the practitioner level.

The research has made a valuable contribution in a number of areas. First, it identifies the importance of understanding how factors such as ageing, work-life balance and the different drivers for flexible work arrangements intersect with workforce policies and, in turn, with employee expectations. The need to have an effective bundle of HR policies and practices is not determined by best practice or current trends; it is influenced and developed using a number of complex factors, of which employee perceptions are pivotal. An organisation cannot expect to attract, engage or retain its employees without understanding their expectations. Having HR practices and policies determined either by senior management or through collective agreements does not necessarily equate to having effective HR practices and policies. Understanding the changing needs and expectations of employees is needed for workforce sustainability, and this also must consider how an organisation's requirements of its workforce may change in light of its strategic plans and goals. Therefore, it can be considered that HR, even with its recent focus on its strategic organisational goals, must also plan for, or envisage how its workforces' needs may change into the future. Having an effective bundle of HR practices and policies, then, requires appropriate and consistent management if they are to be effective. The complexity of HR also extends to how HR practitioners evaluate their practices and policies, which should not only be top-down but bottom-up as well—including how employees and managers perceive or value them.

At the practitioner level, the research has also demonstrated the need to consider how employees' perceptions and expectations can influence the required policies and practices, and also in shaping future practices and strategies. The research has shown that there is a need to gather and to apply the learning from employee-derived information to develop policies and practices to meet future workforce requirements. The views of Gibb (2001) and Guest (2001, 2007) and Edgar and Geare (2003, 2005) about the role of employee voice are confirmed by this research into how HR practitioners need to understand their employees within the context of their organisations (culture, values, goals, policies and practices).

This research also contributes to practitioner knowledge in that the different structures and unique needs of the public sector warrant separate consideration. The research

identified that public sector employees reported a need to feel engaged in interesting and challenging work that contributed to their community. Therefore, at the public sector workforce management level there is a need to understand how this can be used for attraction, engagement and retention. How these aspects are addressed in workforce management practices and policies should also be considered, not only in terms of policy development, but in evaluating employee engagement and developing retention strategies. Given the importance of policies, practices and management approaches, workforce management at the practitioner level needs to emphasise and maximise their use in order to strengthen employee engagement and retention.

The research has also shown the importance of line managers in implementing effective HR policies and practices to employee perceptions and therefore, is related to employees' engagement and retention. The writings of Purcell and Kinnie (2007), Harney and Jordan, (2008) and Boxall and Purcell (2008) assert that HR performance is directly linked to line managers implementing and managing HR policies and practices. The research identified that employee perceptions about their managers are related to how their perceptions of their employment conditions and how this contributes to their engagement and ongoing employment. Line managers and their role in delivering and managing HR policies and practices warrant more attention, both at the HR practitioner and senior management levels, in order to better balance organisational and employee needs. This extends beyond the current formal HR policies and practices and needs to consider the types of workplace arrangements including informal practices and their usage in terms of workforce engagement and retention.

Further contributions of this research at the practitioner level are that HR needs to address individual employee needs within the context of collectively-driven awards and agreements and the policies that are derived from these or that are driven by senior management. The research identified the need for a more flexible approach to the range or types of flexible work policies. Award-based or senior management-driven policies may not be the best arrangement, as this research showed that employees have individual needs that may not be met by one singular policy, at one point in time. The importance of informal workplace arrangements has been identified as a pivotal factor for employees in meeting their work-life balance needs and how these measures impact on their engagement and retention. For managers, informal practices are a pivotal component of their management practices in being able to meet individual and organisational needs on an as-needs basis and without formal application.

The research found strong links between employees and line managers and how informal practices provide employees with arrangements that meet their personal and work needs which, in turn, contribute to their levels of engagement and retention. The ability of line managers to adapt to changing employee needs and the use of informal practices to meet these needs has demonstrated how, in practice, HR needs to gain a better understanding of the relationship between employees, line managers and informal work arrangements.

The final comment to be made is that this research highlights the importance of HR providing support up and down an organisation. Without a holistic approach, there will be section, employee and organisational needs that are not addressed or supported. The employment relationship is complex, as this research has shown, and a process or compliance approach will not provide the necessary or responsive platform to meet the identified challenges.

### **8.3.2 Contributions and implications—theory**

This research drew upon HR theories and focussed on SHRM. SHRM theory is described as a concept that shapes the long-term planning and direction of human resources to provide the best opportunities for the business or organisation to meet its objectives within the most effective use of resources (Nankervis, Compton & McCarthy, 1996; Boxall & Purcell, 2008). SHRM provides a platform that is theoretical in nature, but at the same time is a systematic approach to the management of the workforce (Nankervis, Compton & McCarthy, 1996).

SHRM is a continuous approach that allows an organisation to predict, develop and maintain optimal resource use within its overall strategic plan and goals. The fundamental priority of an HR strategy is to secure and maintain the kind of HR necessary for the organisation's viability (Hughes, 1994; Boxall, 1998). SHRM theory then provides guidelines for organisations to structure these components, and this research contributes by highlighting how organisations should identify and select effective HR practices and policies to meet future challenges and to maintain workforce capability. More important, it confirms evidence that, given the current challenges faced by organisations, the selection of effective HR policies and practices is pivotal to organisational sustainability and success. The important role of line managers in delivering and managing HR policies and practice has been demonstrated in this research and needs to be further developed at the theoretical level, given the clear link to performance of HR and employee engagement.

The research findings supported in part the contingency approach outlined by Donaldson (1996), and specifically Meznar and Johnson (2005, p. 201) and Bowman and Collier (2006, p. 201), that assumes that there is no 'one best way' to structure a firm: structure depends on a number of organisational environmental factors and corporate performance depends (or is contingent) upon a variety of factors. The best practice approach does not allow for the examination of individual organisation or employee needs adequately enough to allow organisations to develop their own policies, practices and management styles.

The research has found that SHRM is not static, but is monitored and evaluated for changes occurring internally and externally so that strategy outcomes can be measured and adjusted as and where needed. This aligns with Kramar (2006, p. 30), in that HR policies developed in a particular situation should be influenced by factors in the internal and external environments. SHRM blueprints need to better address how organisations can monitor and evaluate the alignment of organisational and workforce needs, given the complexity of employment relationships.

The research contributes to theory by demonstrating that workforce management theories need to incorporate into their guidelines or approaches to sustainable workforce management the importance of employee voice. Employee voice, as shown in this research, provides valuable information about effective HR policies and practices. Employee views take into account the organisational context, which is paramount in determining workforce policies and practices. This research has also contributed by demonstrating how evaluations of employee perceptions and expectations contribute to the development of strategies to address contemporary workforce challenges. It extends the work of Gibb (2001) and Guest (2001, 2007) and Edgar and Geare (2003, 2005), highlighting the importance of 'employee voice' in contributing to the development of strategies.

SHRM theory does not have a universal template, but it is able to guide and direct decision-making to develop committed and capable employees, who can attain high engagement and job satisfaction while performing at a high level to meet organisational requirements. The research acknowledges that SHRM theory needs to consider that a top-down approach may provide for the theoretical alignment between organisational and workforce goals and needs. However, a bottom-up approach to utilising employee perceptions could result in a better alignment of employee, manager and organisational workforce policies and practices. These policies and practices would then result in a better alignment, given the consideration of employee views, and thus achieve better

outcomes. In addition, the research has shown how employee voice can make a valuable contribution to the development of organisational engagement and retention strategies. This is because it draws on the views of employees whose employment in their organisations is more relevant than externally-obtained research or comment. Therefore, theory needs to consider the importance of employee voice in guiding policy and how employee voice can make an effective contribution to organisational structures and practices to achieve the desired alignment of organisational goals with the workforce.

This research also contributes to Workforce Management theories by highlighting the emerging focus on why workforce policies and practices that are determined by collective awards and agreements, providing a one-size-fits-all approach, are not always effective in the contemporary workplace. Individual needs are not met solely by these provisions. The employment relationship requires more; it requires the organisation to invest in and listen to its employees in order to arrive at effective HR policies and practices. Theory needs to address this in greater depth and provide a bridge between theory and practice, whereby HR policies and practices can be more realistically achieved and measured.

Finally, this research has examined the importance of informal practices, at the workforce level, to employee attraction, engagement and retention and provided managers with a work-level tool that effectively meets individual and organisational goals. The research has identified the value of informal practices held by employees and managers and how these are used to meet individual needs and, in turn, contribute to the productivity of the organisation. The research also identified how this practice has derived benefits in terms of engagement and retention. Theory needs to better acknowledge and address the role, purpose and benefit of informal practices and how informal work-level practices contribute to sustainable and productive workforces.

## **8.4 Parameters of the research**

Any research is bounded by time, place and the selected methods. This section of the chapter details the limitations and the strengths of this research.

### **8.4.1 Parameters of the research—limitations**

Research occurs at a particular point in time; therefore, the literature review, including relevant research and theoretical contributions, is also limited to that time. This study has limitations common to other qualitative research in that only 30 employees and managers were interviewed; participants were self-selected; and there was no ability to

re-interview participants at different times to assess whether their priorities or expectations had altered. Not all Agencies were represented in stage one or two of the research and stage three involved a survey with limited free-text areas. Therefore, this did not allow for Agency comments and responses to be followed up by interview or other measures in order to gain a better understanding of their responses.

Thirty participants and 13 Agencies were involved in this research, therefore the findings may be considered limited because of the number of participants and organisations involved at each research stage. Research replicating this study would need to be undertaken in other public sectors to confirm the findings in regards to public sector application and to extend this particular field of study. The number of research participants may provide another limitation in terms of the representation of age groups and given that half of the participants were over 45 years of age.

The research participants were drawn from Agencies within a state sector. Therefore, these research findings may only be relevant to this particular public sector. Whilst the participants were drawn from different Agencies, their core terms and conditions of employment are delivered on a whole-of-service basis, and are largely centrally determined. Therefore, the findings may be limited to this particular public service jurisdiction and may vary in other jurisdictions.

Another limitation identified is that the research involved participants providing self-reports of their views and expectations. There were no provisions to test whether their self-report information was valid; participants were free to comment about their employment without having to provide evidence to substantiate or prove what they were saying. Participants were asked to comment or contribute to topics or areas that were important to them. Therefore, they were able to self-select these topics without explaining why they made those choices. This limitation is also noted for the survey responses in stage three of the research as there was no validation of the responses able to be undertaken.

#### **8.4.2 Parameters of the research—strengths**

The research design involved a mixed-method approach, which allowed for multiple views to be collected at one point in time (from employees, managers and organisations). The strength of this thesis is its contribution to theory and employment research and literature by examining a number of aspects of the employment relationship, the value and meaning of work and its arrangement and management, relating both to organisations and to individuals. This contribution is unique because it

adopted a whole-of-public-sector approach and also incorporated individual Agency HR or workforce management by researching and examining a number of contemporary factors.

A further strength of this research is that it described and detailed the importance that managers and employees place on the range of informal workplace arrangements and their benefits. This research contributes to both theory and practice as the value of these provisions is a key factor in engagement and retention of employees. The value to managers in being able to use informal provisions to manage their work section was also identified. Formalising such arrangements was not supported by either employees or managers. The awareness of senior management regarding informal arrangements was not identified from the organisational survey results. Informal flexible workplace practices need to be considered at the practitioner and theoretical levels in terms of their value, and how they can be applied for effective engagement and retention. Therefore, the research has contributed practically by identifying the importance to managers of informal workplace arrangements at the workplace level and the perceived benefits to employees which, in turn, contributes to the engagement and retention of employees whilst meeting organisational requirements.

At a theoretical level, the literature does not always acknowledge or identify the importance of informal arrangements sufficiently, how they may contribute to effective workplace productivity or how they may actually align with organisational goals. For effective attraction, engagement and retention strategies, theory needs to address the role and benefit of informal flexible work arrangements and how different approaches are managed to meet individual and organisational needs. *Ad hoc* arrangements need to be acknowledged and further examined at a theoretical level. In HRM and other workforce management there is a need to acknowledge the role that informal workplace arrangements have, in line with formal provisions, if a true alignment is to be achieved to meet both organisational and employee needs. This research shows the importance of informal workplace measures in the employment relationship and needs to be addressed more thoroughly at the theoretical level.

The research has also demonstrated how employee and manager perceptions can be used practically and theoretically to inform how effective bundles of HR practices and policies could be constituted, managed and evaluated. This could, in turn, provide for a more realistic alignment between HR policies in meeting the strategic requirements of the organisation and employee needs.



Understanding the value of HR policies and practices and how their management can be improved to meet both employee and organisational needs is another strength of this research. The research involved employee and manager perceptions about their employment and, given the qualitative method used, provided valuable information that can contribute to HR policy and practice formulation, delivery and evaluation. To that extent, the research extends an understanding of what informs organisational workforce management and how, both in policy determinations and management styles and provisions, employees' and organisational needs can be met.

### **8.5 Directions for future research**

The design and findings of this research indicate that a natural direction for future research would be to undertake a larger study, based on the research constructs, to confirm the findings and to extend the field of study to how employees' 'voices' or perceptions can inform workforce management and employment policies and practices. Placing future research within other public sectors would be valuable, not only in confirming and extending the research findings, but also to extend to the different areas including organisational development, organisational design and organisational psychology that examine and explore workplace policies and practices. The research findings have implications for how employment relationships are developed, constructed and maintained and how theory and practice understands this.

The research findings about employees not having firm retirement plans and the factors identified by employees in remaining at work require additional research. The role of organisations and managers in informing about their retirement plans warrants additional research to identify how organisations can assist employees in this regard. This may involve research to identify programs or strategies that assist employees in planning for retirement or in organisations providing a range of pre- and post-retirement employment options. The research also found that employees, managers and organisations were unclear as to who should have responsibility for informing the employee of retirement and post-retirement employment. If retention is a key critical factor for workplace sustainability, it would appear that organisational practices and policies need further development in this regard. Research on such policy and practice components is necessary to extend both practical and theoretical knowledge in this regard.

Additional research is strongly indicated regarding the types of informal workplace arrangements needed and how they could contribute to employee wellbeing, engagement and retention and workplace productivity. The research identified how

these arrangements are individually developed, and involved an array of different provisions. This counters many of the current workplace policies that are collectively determined, and concurs with the literature and research findings on the need to have individually-based and focussed policies and practices to meet individual needs. Additional research is warranted to understand the importance and role of informal arrangements to the employer, the manager and the employee, as the research indicates it is a strong factor.

Research is needed to examine how informal practices are considered at a senior management level and how the resulting practices and benefits are determined, implemented and evaluated. Within practice and theoretical frameworks, formal policies have a place if structured to meet strategic or organisational goals. Therefore, if informal practices are greatly valued by both employees and managers, how can they be formally acknowledged but not necessarily formally developed or managed? This aspect could be further examined by using a similar approach but extending the Agency or organisational component through interviews with Agency HR managers in order to gain a better understanding of how policies and practices are developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. This would also include the role and importance placed on line managers. Further research opportunities are also indicated regarding the role of informal practices and how these arrangements enhance or contribute to organisational and individual performance.

A key finding of the research was that public sector employees were attracted, engaged and retained by challenging work that contributes to the community. This aspect has been considered in the public sector research detailed in the literature review, and constituted an important difference from findings from the private sector. Additional research into what employees hold to be challenging work or work contributing to the community needs to better understand how these are perceived and understood. This should involve employees, managers and organisations in order to develop an across-group understanding and alignment. Further research in this regard would extend our understanding of its importance, and could furthermore be a valuable element for public sector organisations to attract, engage and retain employees. The intrinsic value to employees of having challenging work and contributing to community is important, and a deeper examination of their worth to the individual and organisations is warranted. This research would inform and contribute to the wide array of workforce management and HR disciplines and theories. Research involving employee 'voice' can potentially strengthen organisational capability in building workplace sustainability to meet workforce challenges.

Research is needed to identify a future range of flexible work arrangements in order to meet work-life balance and other employee needs. This applies not only to meeting individual needs, but also to how organisations can address the need for flexibility in situations where, because of shift work or other work arrangements and operational requirements, there is limited ability to offer flexible work arrangements. If flexible work arrangements are a key component for attraction, engagement and retention, then what other arrangements could provide similar benefits for employees who are unable to access flexible work options? Research to identify types of flexible work provisions should be undertaken to identify individuals' preferences and whether these accord with the concept of life stage and work. This field of research would also contribute to understanding the relationship between collectively-determined provisions and individual needs and access to such provisions.

The final suggestion for future research involves extending our understanding of alignment between organisational goals, HR or workforce policies and practices and employee expectations and needs. The research has found that whilst such an alignment may appear theoretically and managerially desirable, the actual assessment of the degree of alignment and its benefits is essentially complex and difficult to achieve. The purpose of alignment or fit between these aspects needs to be further researched. This applies to theoretical and practical views on organisational design, employment practices and policies and whether there is an optimal alignment that is practical, achievable and will be sustainable in light of changes to organisational goals, workplace practices, management styles and the differing needs of employees.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the research findings and their relevance and contribution to theory and practice. It described their implications in terms of the literature, theory and practice. The limitations and strengths of the research were identified, along with directions for possible future research. It was the intention of the research to identify the degree of alignment across the three research groups of employees, managers and organisations. The research explored this alignment by drawing on the expectations of employees and managers and how, or where, these expectations fitted with organisational policies and practices.

The research findings extend the literature and theory that suggest that effective workforce management needs to understand employees' views in order to determine the appropriate bundles of HR policies and practices beyond legal instruments (awards and agreements). To meet the identified challenges, organisations need better insight

into employees' perceptions about their employment. The research has shown that age (or the assumptions about perceived generational differences) is not a major determinant of employee attraction, engagement and retention. Each organisation is different, and therefore each organisation must make a concerted effort to develop appropriate HR practices to meet its workforce's needs, extending beyond merely adopting best practice measures or collectively-determined award or agreement provisions.

The research was exploratory, seeking to understand the context of how and why employment conditions have changed over time and how they may change in the future. In particular, it examined practical and theoretical aspects of attraction, engagement and retention in a contemporary public sector workforce. It aimed to explore current and future expectations of employees, including managers, relating to the key pillars of attraction, engagement and retention across all age groups, employment categories and occupational groups. This research was unique, in that it drew upon employee- and manager- held perspectives and expectations to advance our understanding of contemporary workforce issues and their complexity.

The importance and value of informal flexible workplace arrangements for employees and managers is a key finding of this research. How informal workplace arrangements contribute to engagement and attraction for employees and managers were clearly evidenced in the findings. Their inclusion in organisational practices and policy development, implementation and management has benefits as described in the findings for employees, managers and the organisation. The employment landscape has changed and will continue to change. In light of the contemporary challenges identified relating to the increasing need for work-life balance of employees and the ongoing need for organisations to gain operational or productivity efficiencies, the importance of informal workplace arrangements is a key element in addressing these factors for effective attraction, engagement and retention.

This thesis contributes to the emerging body of knowledge by exploring the different expectations and perceptions of employees, managers and organisations and highlighting the importance of how this information can inform and contribute to workplace HR policy and practice decisions. The thesis also extends the understanding of how workforce management can be guided and informed by SHRM theory. Perhaps most importantly, the research demonstrates the need to better understand the alignment of employee, manager and organisational expectations regarding the employment relationship and its link to organisational goals and sustainability.





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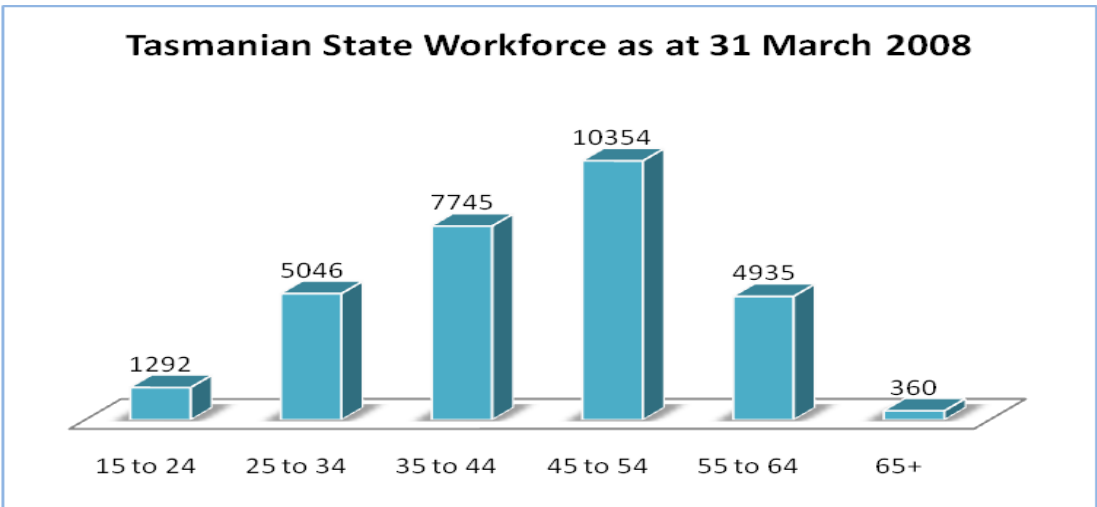
Yuile, C, Chang, A, Gudmundsson, A and Sawang, S 2012, 'The role of life friendly policies on employees' work-life balance' *Journal of Management and Organization*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 53-63.



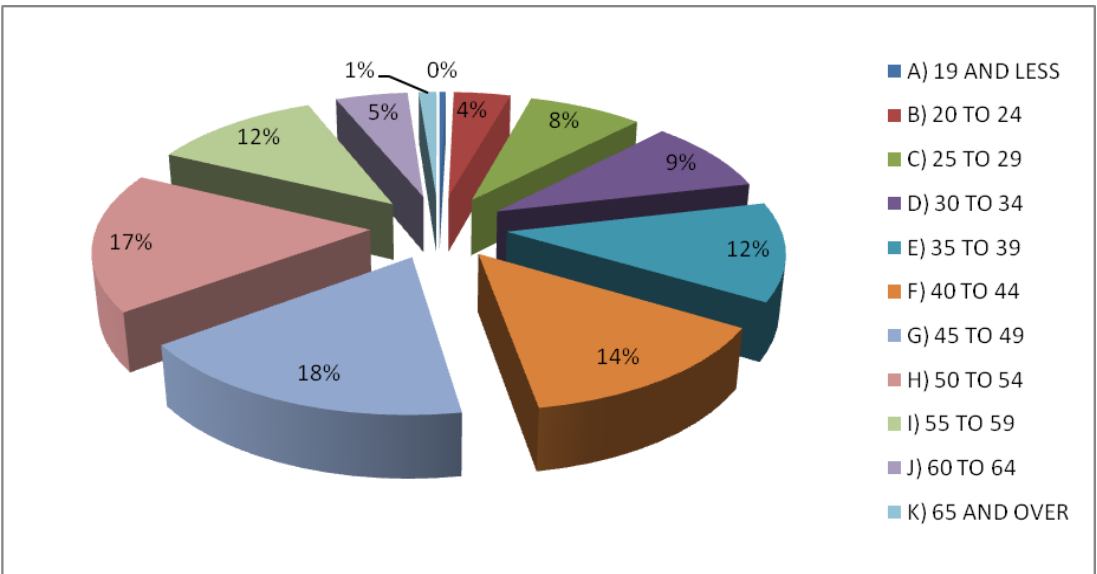
Tasmanian State Service Workforce Profile – Extract

As at 31 March 2008, the Tasmanian State Workforce comprised 29,732 people (headcount). There were 9926 male and 19806 female employees, providing for a gender ratio of 66.62% female and 33.38% male. Over 53 per cent of the Tasmanian State Service are 45 years of age or older. 84.28% of the Tasmanian State Service are ongoing employees, 14.15% are on fixed term or casual contracts and 0.98% are in Senior Executive Service. The following charts provide demographic information of the Tasmanian State Service Workforce Profile for 2008.

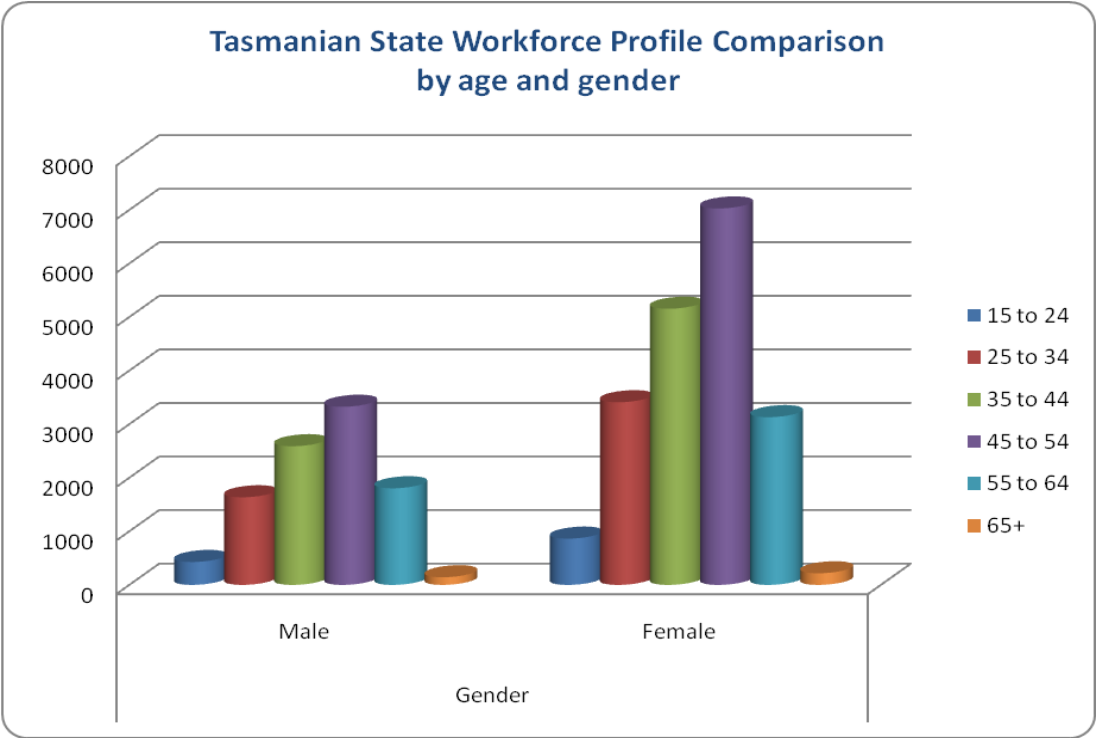
Age profile (10 year age brackets)



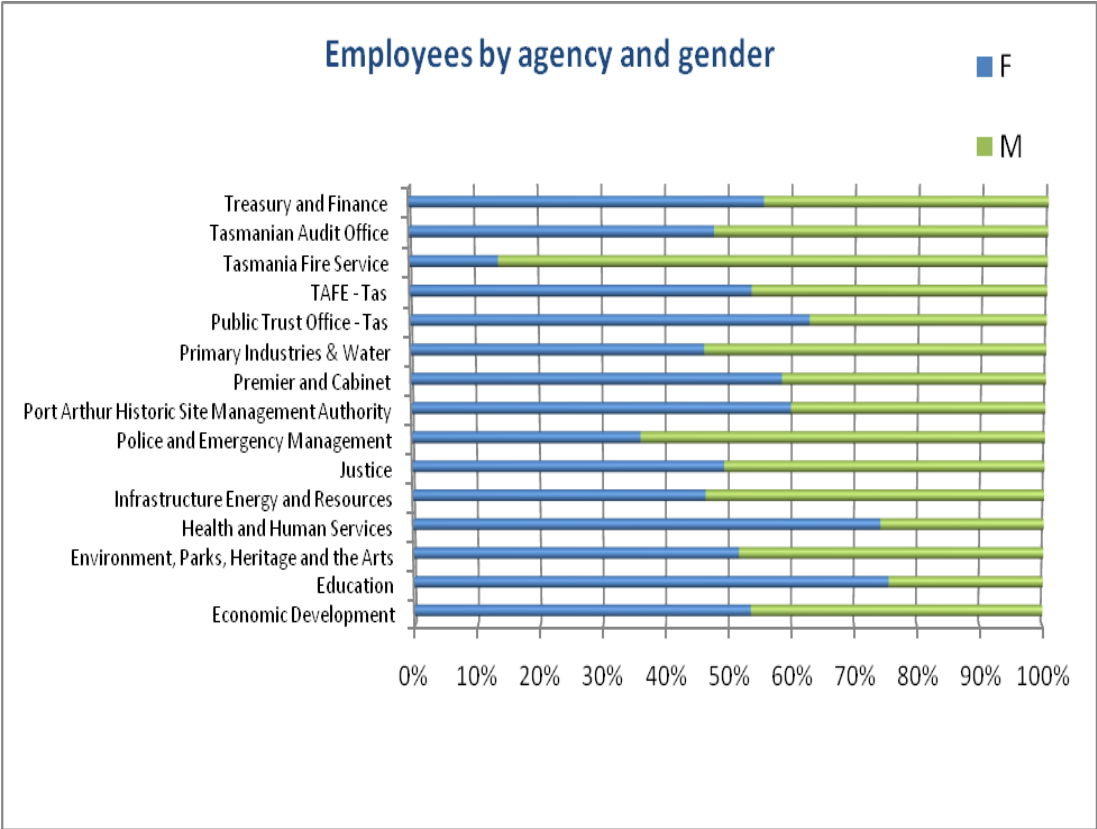
Age Profile in 5 year groups expressed as a percentage of the Service



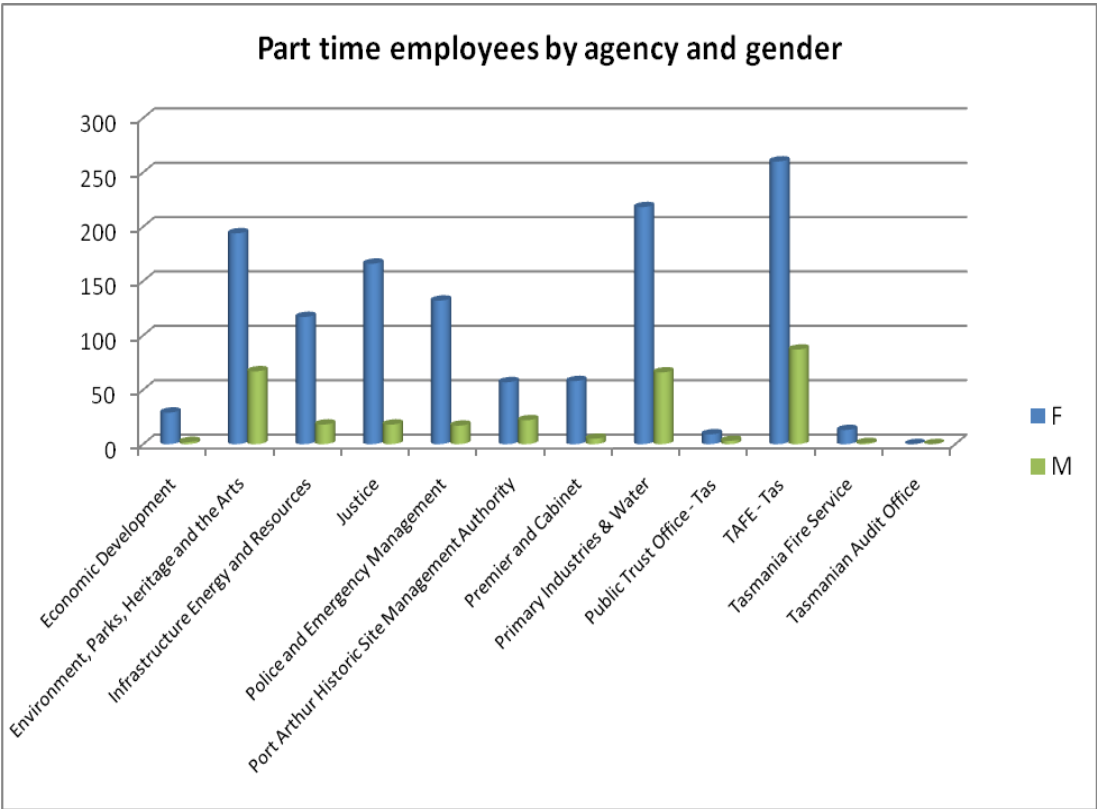
Age and Gender Profile



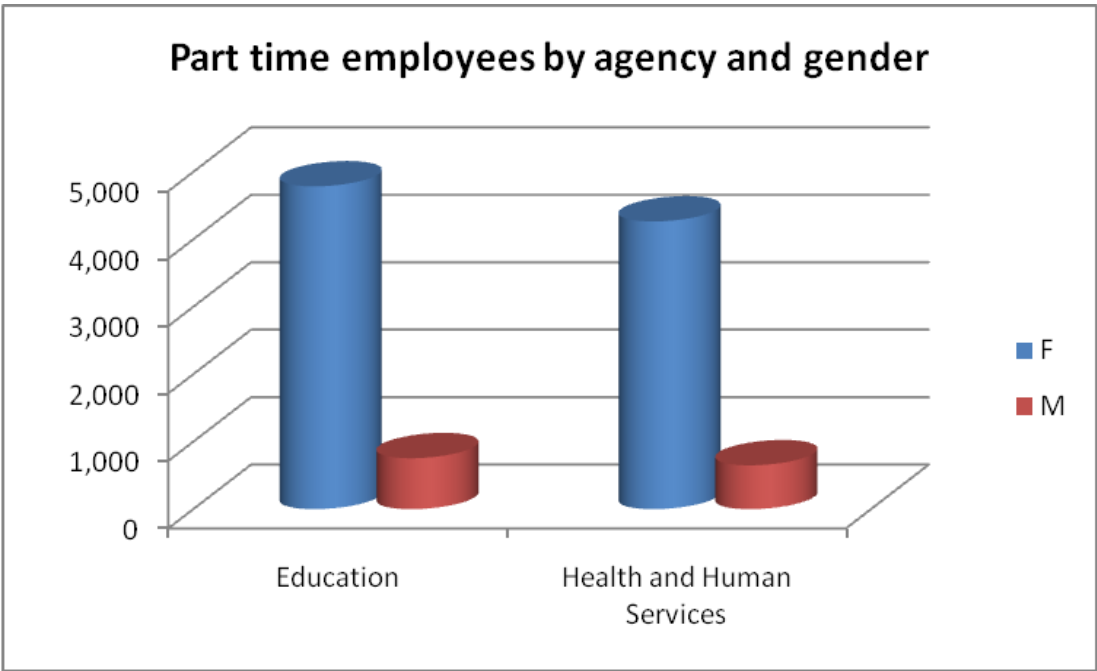
Employees by age and gender



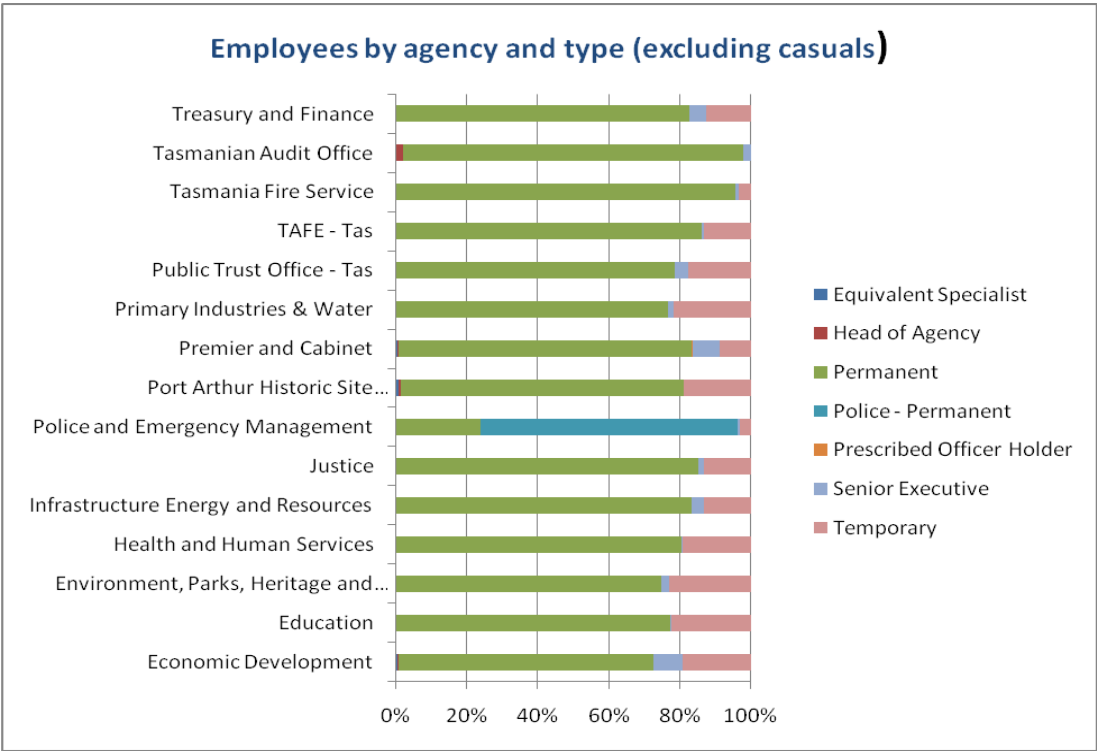
Part-time employees by age and gender



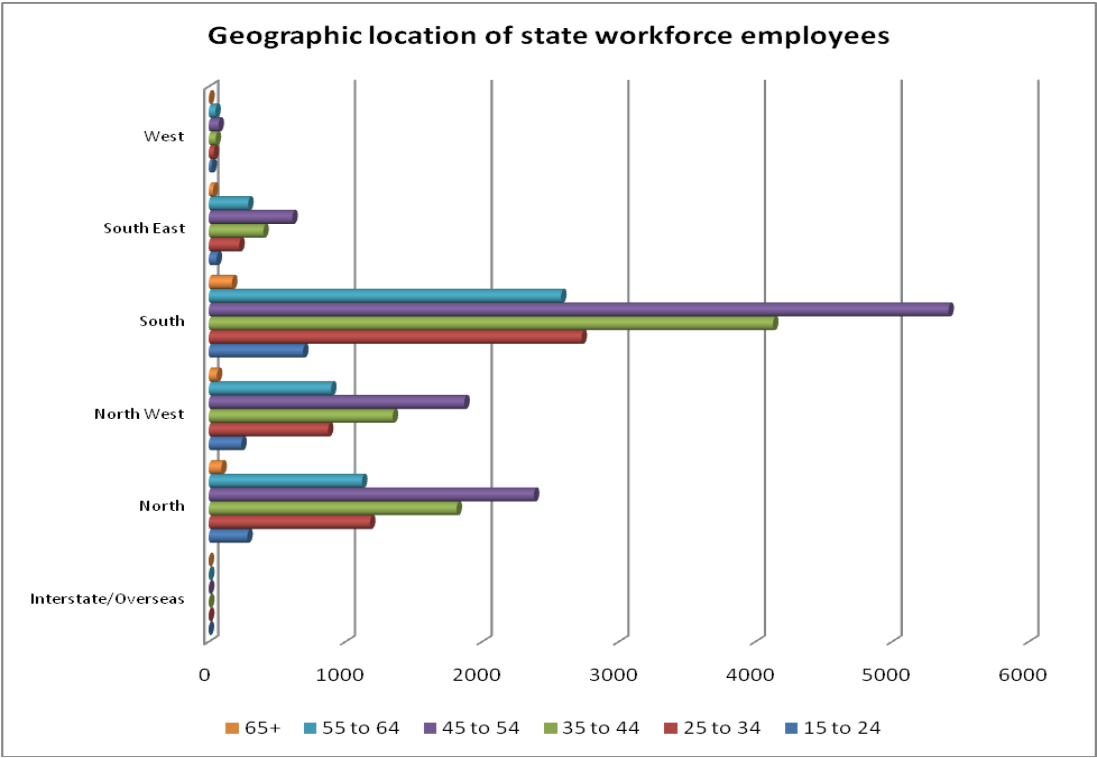
Part-time employees by age and gender (Departments of Health and Human Services and Education)



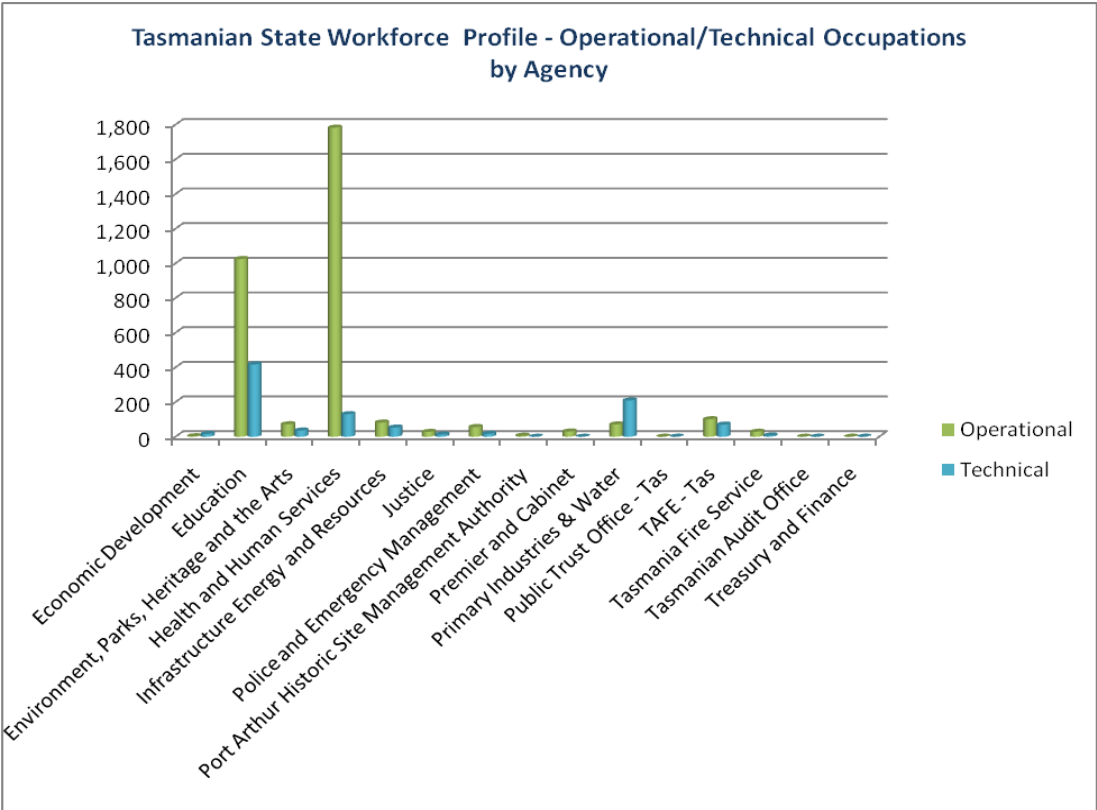
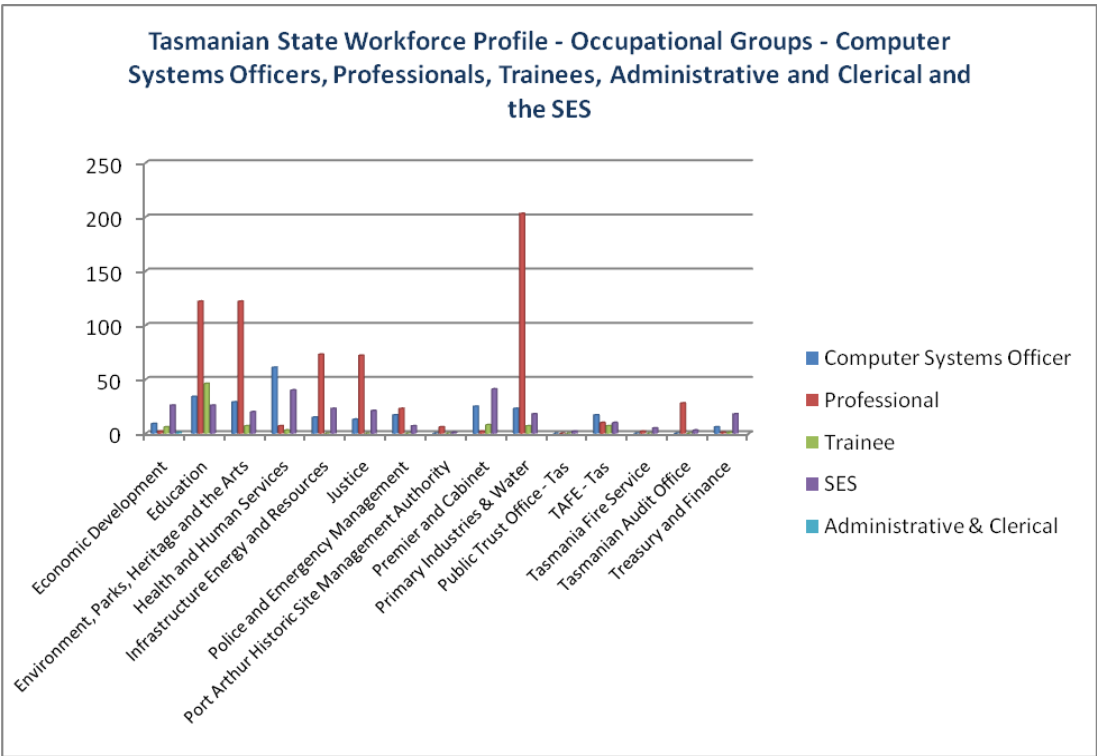
Employees by employment category and by Agency



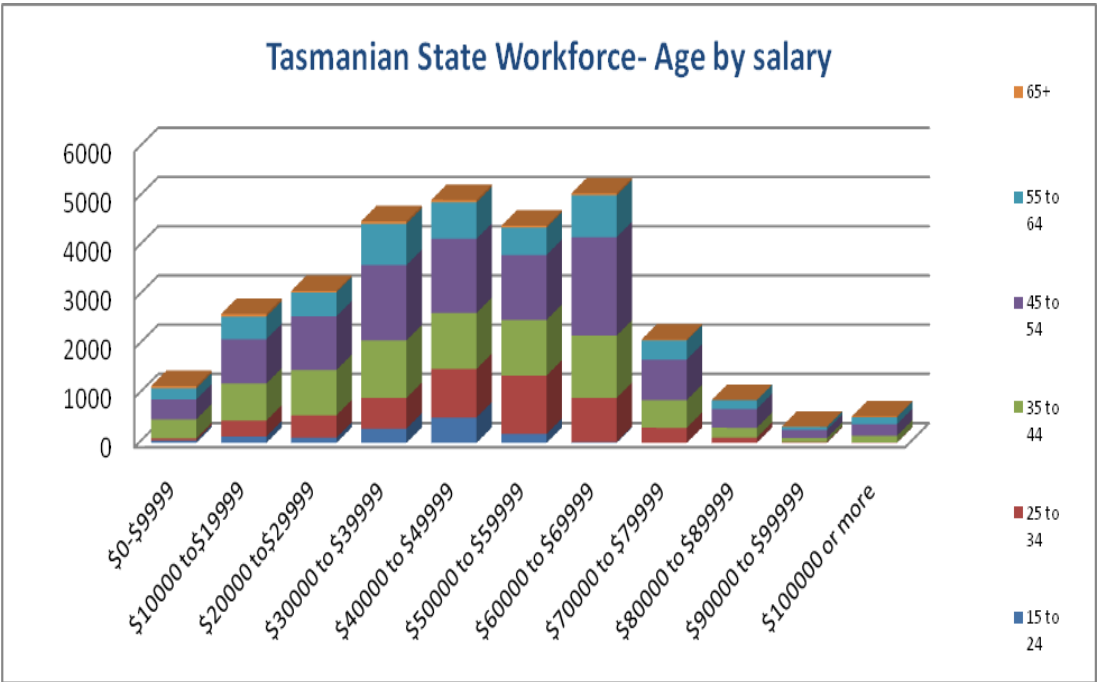
Employees by geographic work location



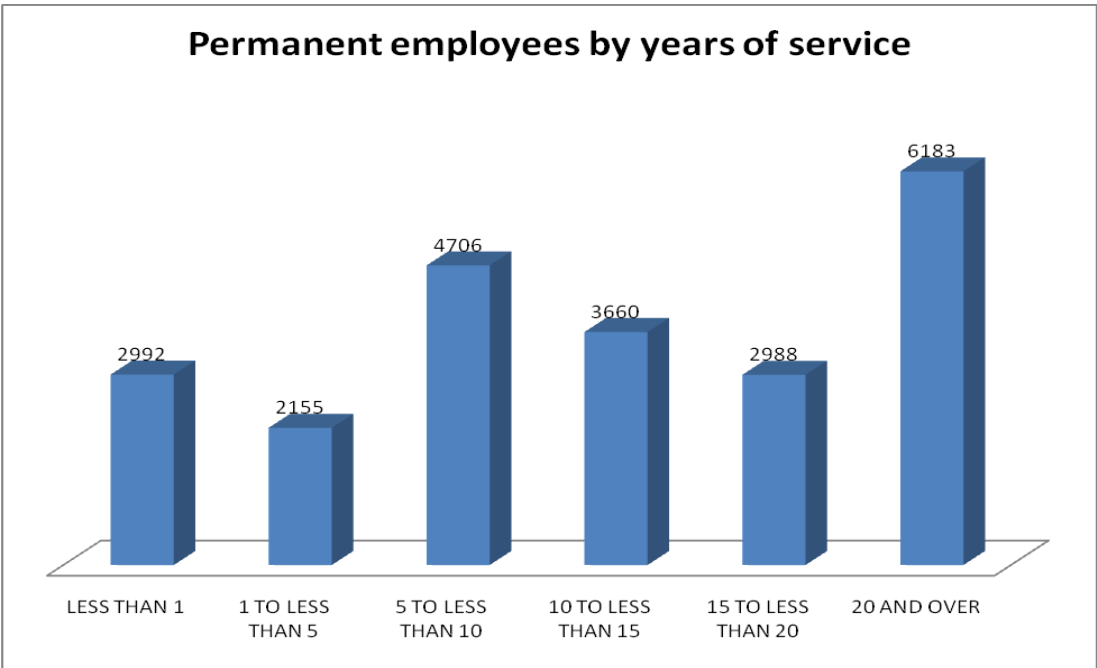
Employees by selected occupational groups



**Employees by age and salary group**



**Permanent employees by length of service**



**Invitation letter to Heads of Agencies to participate in the research**

Head of Agency

Dear

I would like to invite your agency to participate in research being sponsored by the Public Sector Management Office. This research will be pivotal to *People Directions* and will provide over-arching support and information that, in turn, will assist in state service people management activities.

The research is being undertaken by Katrina Gonda, Senior Consultant, Employment Policy and Programs in the Public Sector Management Office as part of her PhD candidature requirements. The research title is "The changing profile of the Tasmanian State workforce: key factors for sustainable workforce management".

The research covers issues pertaining to contemporary workforce development and management including, ageing workforces, work-life balance, flexible employment options and workforce planning. This research complements the themes that are included in the *People Directions*.

Your support is sought in this endeavour and the research involves two stages or points of interaction for agencies. The first stage involves Ms Gonda (the researcher), following approval from agencies, contacting employees by email and inviting their participation in an interview. This will involve employees and managers and it is anticipated that a total of 100 employees and 50 managers throughout the State Service will be contacted in this manner. From this voluntary interviews for 25 employees and 12 managers will then be arranged. The interviews will be conducted at the Public Sector Management Office and therefore only employees in the Hobart area will be involved.

The second stage will occur later and this involves the distribution of a questionnaire for agencies to complete. The questionnaire will concern issues relating to ageing, workforce planning, work conditions and leave arrangements that are currently in place and being planned for the future.

The research will be undertaken under the ethical requirements, direction and guidelines as approved by the University of Tasmania. The research findings will be made available as the research progresses via this office.

Written confirmation of your agency's involvement is requested by 1 December 2008. It is anticipated that the interview stages will be undertaken between January and April 2009.

Further information about the research can be obtained via my office or by contacting Katrina Gonda directly by email [katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au) or by telephone on 03 6233 7036.

Yours sincerely

Frank Ogle  
DIRECTOR

November 2008

<b>Invitation to employees to participate in the research</b>
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	<b>Invitation to participate in research study-employees</b> The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management	
<p><b>What is the research about?</b></p> <p>The research involves contemporary workforce development and management which is currently facing a number of challenges in achieving an effective and efficient workplace considering ageing workforces, a reduction in the number of young people entering the labour market and the increasing need for employees to balance their work and life issues. These challenges impact across the sector of human resource development and management activities including recruitment, selection, retention, workforce profiling and prediction models, skills identification and training and development requirements and frameworks, performance management frameworks and employment conditions. The research also aims to identify if there are intergenerational issues in the workplace and how agencies can best met work/life balance issues and expectations of its employees.</p> <p>You are invited to contribute to this research by participating in an interview.</p> <p><b>Why is this interview being conducted?</b></p> <p>The chief investigators and supervisors of the research project are Dr Martin Grimmer and Dr Angela Martin from the University of Tasmania. The interview is being conducted as part of a research project being undertaken by Katrina Gonda to fulfil the requirements for a PhD in the School of Management at the University of Tasmania. The research is supported by the Public Sector Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet.</p> <p><b>What is the purpose of this interview?</b></p> <p>The purpose of the survey is to gain an understanding of employee's views, perceptions and expectations surrounding their employment. The research concerns the context of how work is arranged, the value of work and related areas including work/life balance, flexible employment and age related issues.</p> <p><b>How long will the interview take?</b></p> <p>The interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. The interviews will be held at the Public Sector Management Office, 144 Macquarie Street, Hobart.</p> <p><b>What type of interview is it?</b></p> <p>The interviewer will ask you only a few questions, followed by discussions of the participant's experience, perceptions and views regarding their employment.</p> <p><b>How will my answers be used?</b></p> <p>The interview will be audio taped for transcription and will be returned to the participant for correction and amendment. The transcript will then be coded. Your responses will be treated in <b>confidence</b>; no personally identifiable information will be released. Brief notes may also be taken during the interview for the purposes of noting question progress or for the purpose of recall during the interview.</p> <p>Some of the information on the participant information sheet will be used for demographic analysis and hence in age categories, but small demographic groups will not be reported in a format that could be considered to have any identifiable elements. It is a university requirement that responses are securely stored.</p> <p><b>Do I have to participate?</b></p> <p>Participation is <b>voluntary</b> and participants may discontinue their participation at any time.</p>		



**Who do I contact if I have any queries?**

You can contact the researcher Katrina Gonda by telephone on 62 32 7036 or by emailing [katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au). You may also contact the chief investigators, Dr Martin Grimmer, Head of School or Dr Angela Martin, Deputy Head of School, School of Management, Faculty of Business and Commerce, University of Tasmania by emailing [martin.grimmer@utas.edu.au](mailto:martin.grimmer@utas.edu.au) or [angela.martin@utas.edu.au](mailto:angela.martin@utas.edu.au).

This research has ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study you should contact the Executive Officer (phone 03 6226 7479 or email – [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au)). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote *HREC project number H10356*.

**What do I do to express my interest in participating?**

Please complete the attached details sheet within 10 days of receiving this email and return the form in hard copy or by email to Katrina Gonda (email: [Katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:Katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au) or by mail to Katrina Gonda, Public Sector Management Office, 144 Macquarie Street, Hobart and mark the envelope "confidential and private". You will receive an email acknowledgement upon receipt of your form.

**On what basis will I be selected or not for an interview?**

The only criteria for selection or non-selection will be on the basis of the number of expressions of interest received. The research requires participations from a number of different age groups e.g. under 30 years of age, 30 to 45 years of age and employees over the age of 45. There are a limited number of places for each age group.



**Dr Martin Grimmer**  
Investigators



**Dr Angela Martin**



**Katrina Gonda**

## Details Sheet-employee

The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management

### SECTION 1: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

1.	Code:
1.1	Age: _____ years
1.2	Place of Birth _____ e.g. Hobart, Sydney, London
1.3	Gender      Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>
1.4	How many years have you lived in Tasmania? _____ (years)
1.5	Date joined the Tasmanian State Service      __ / __ / __      dd,mm,yyyy. If unsure of exact date indicate year or month and year.
1.6	Are you currently in a full time <input type="checkbox"/> or part time <input type="checkbox"/> position?
1.7	Are you a permanent or fixed term employee?      Permanent <input type="checkbox"/> Fixed term <input type="checkbox"/>
1.8	Have you had periods of extended leave (long service, maternity/paternity/other)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
1.9	What is your position title? _____ e.g. Administrative Assistant, Team Leader, Manager, Plant Operator
1.10	What is your classification level? _____ e.g. Administration and Clerical Level 4
1.11	How long have you been in your current position? _____ months/years
1.12	Which Department do you currently work in? _____
1.13	Is this the first position that you have held in the Tasmanian State Service? _____
1.14	How long do anticipate continuing your employment in the Tasmania State Service? _____ (years)

### SECTION 2: EDUCATION

2.1	What is your highest level of primary or secondary schooling that you have successfully completed? (select the highest level only) <input type="checkbox"/> Did not go to school
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	<input type="checkbox"/> Year 7 or below <input type="checkbox"/> Year 8 or below <input type="checkbox"/> Year 9 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Year 12
2.2	Have you completed any trade qualifications? If yes, please provide title of course and institution.  
2.3	What is the highest level of education you have achieved? Please indicate discipline area and institution e.g. Bachelor of Business UTAS. This includes undergraduate degrees, Associate Diplomas, Certificate of Technology, Technician Certificate, vocational qualifications, Undergraduate degrees, post-graduate degrees, Masters or PhD. Include title, field of study and institution.   If this question does not apply, please write N/A.
<b>3. DEPENDENTS</b>  Could you please indicate if you currently have dependent care responsibilities (this includes children, parents or other elderly family members)      Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If yes, could you please indicate number/ages and gender   If yes, please indicate the number of hours per week during normal working hours that you have to make alternative arrangements for in order to meet your work commitments   Do you believe that you will have caring responsibilities for either children or elderly family members in the future?      Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you regularly participate in sporting or community events?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are you currently undertaking a course of study?    Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Consent Form-employees</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</p>	
<b>Research Project Title:</b>	<b>The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</b>	
<b>Researcher's Name:</b>	<b>Katrina Gonda</b>	
<p>I have been advised of the nature and purpose of the research. I understand and agree to participate in the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.</li> <li>• I understand that this involves an interview and that the interview will be audio taped.</li> <li>• I understand that the interview will be approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in duration.</li> <li>• I understand that the audio tape will only be used as a basis of writing up the interview into hard copy text format.</li> <li>• I understand that I will receive a transcript of the interview and will return it to the researcher with any amendments. Following the return of the transcript, I understand that the tape will be erased.</li> <li>• I understand that the contents of the tape and the transcript will be kept in confidence by the researcher and only included in any wider reporting in ways that will not identify me as the interviewee. I understand that all the research data will be securely (locked) stored in the Commerce Building, on the University of Tasmania (Hobart campus) premises for a period of five years, after which time it will be destroyed. I understand that any electronic record will be deleted and that hard copies will be shredded after a period of five years following publication of the data.</li> <li>• I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time during the research and can at that time choose to withdraw any data I have provided. I further understand that I can, if I wish, withdraw any data I have provided up until analysis of the data commences.</li> <li>• I understand that I will not receive any payment for my participation in the interview by either the University or the researcher.</li> </ul> <p><b>Name of interviewee:</b> .....</p> <p><b>Signed:</b> .....</p> <p><b>Dated:</b> .....</p> <p>I have explained the research to the participant and I believe that the consent is informed that the person understands the implications of participation.</p> <p><b>Researcher's signature and date</b>.....</p>		

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Interview Guide – Employees</h2> <h3 style="text-align: center;">DISCUSSION POINTS</h3> <p>The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</p>	
<p><b>ATTRACTORS FOR APPLYING FOR A STATE SERVICE POSITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work was related to my qualifications or experience</li> <li>• The position involved interesting work</li> <li>• Location of the position</li> <li>• The reputation of the Agency/Department</li> <li>• Just wanted a job</li> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Was told by someone that it was a good place to work:</li> <li>• Believed the position would allow for job security:</li> <li>• Ability to transfer to other areas/departments later:</li> <li>• A good salary and ability to progress in salary range:</li> <li>• The training/development offered</li> </ul>	
<p><b>CURRENT JOB SATISFACTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duties/expectations made clear</li> <li>• Recognition for effort</li> <li>• Regular feedback provided</li> <li>• Good managers/supervisors</li> <li>• Ability to be creative/innovative</li> <li>• Good leadership</li> <li>• Interesting work</li> <li>• Sound people management practices</li> <li>• Good working relationships</li> <li>• Training provided</li> <li>• Career pathways</li> <li>• Salary</li> <li>• Leave entitlements</li> <li>• Flexible working arrangements</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> <p><b>REMAINING WITH THE TSS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoying current position</li> <li>• Encouraged and included in team activities</li> <li>• Feel valued and acknowledged for my work</li> <li>• Provided with the opportunity to contribute and consulted on work matters</li> <li>• The work is interesting</li> <li>• Good salary</li> <li>• Job location</li> <li>• Workload levels</li> <li>• Ability to manage work/life balance</li> <li>• Flexible employment</li> <li>• Training/development opportunities</li> <li>• Ability to move to other areas/agencies</li> <li>• Relative job security</li> </ul>	

## **WORK/LIFE BALANCE**

**What is it? Is it more than just different patterns of work? How do define a balance between work and your outside life? Are there conflicts or benefits between the two?**

- Flexitime
- LWOP
- Changed patterns of work arrangement: start and finishing times, working outside normal hours and days
- Self-rosters
- Career breaks
- Job Sharing
- Work from home
- Better training and development opportunities
- Access to retirement/health information
- Health and wellbeing provisions/programs
- More flexible leave arrangements: e.g. half pay
- More flexible employment options (beyond part time arrangements. e.g. 3 months work followed by 3 months leave but salary paid at .5 over the 6 months
- Job rotation/interagency rotation
- Payment for work not hours
- Process to allow a transition in occupations where age factors may impact on work capability
- On call or stand in allowances for people who have retired or semi-retired but are available to work at short notice

## **RETIREMENT/WORK INTENTIONS**

**When do you intend to retire/leave your employment with the Tasmanian State Service?  
What are some of the possible reasons for not continuing:**

- Not enjoying current position
- Feel not encouraged or included in team
- Not valued, acknowledged
- Not provided with the opportunity to contribute or to be consulted on work matters
- Offer or opportunity of other more interesting work
- Offer or opportunity for better salary
- Excessive or increasing workload
- Need to care for family or to obtain a better work/life balance
- Access to and ability to accrue additional leave hours than currently provided for (Leave bank)
- More flexible phased-in-retirement arrangements and return to work options post-retirement

## **Interview format-employees**

The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management

### Introduction

The research I am doing is exploring the changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce. In this the most critical factors for public sector organisations at present for maintaining workforce capability appears to be related to:

1. Ageing populations. This has a twofold effect on the Tasmanian public sector; firstly there is the issue of continuing to provide services to the Tasmanian public. There will be a continuing demand for public services, especially in the area of health, along with changes to service delivery mechanisms.
2. An ageing workforce. The Tasmanian State Workforce is ageing and there is a general trend to older employees across all of the agencies and the age increase of employees is also noted in a number of occupational areas. Retaining employees will be a key imperative for the Tasmanian State Workforce levels.
3. Age differences. Recent literature has shown that there is a considerable level of comment and interest in generational differences and how they play out in the workplace. This is evidenced in the literature covering attraction, engagement and retention policies and practices. This also encompasses the conditions of employment, and management policies and practices.
4. Work/life balance. There has been considerable attention and activity related to work/life balance for individuals and how this has been addressed within organisations. This too impacts on workforce management policies, practices and outcomes. There appears to be a number of different meanings for what work/life balance is and how this understood by individuals and organisation and how it should be addressed in the workplace.

I would like to gain a better understanding of how employees view their employment and issues relating to what attracted you to join the state service, what are the key benefits of being a state service employee and what you perceive will be instrumental in you continuing your employment.

[Demographic material (age, gender, position, length in position, qualifications (information sheet given to interviewees at the commencement of the interview))].

Do you require any further explanation or information at this time?

Are you comfortable to continue the interview and to now ask you a series of questions? These questions may require you to take a few moments to consider before answering and that is fine.

**Question format:**

1. Can you explain why you applied for a position in the Tasmanian State Service (Workforce)?
2. Were or have these reasons been met?
3. What do you like about your job? What could be better?
4. What things do you believe will contribute to you continuing in your role?
5. What do you believe work/life balance is or means?
6. What work/life balance aspects do you think are attractive to you?
7. What flexible work options do you think you may need in the future and why?
8. How long do you think you will remain in this position (and in the state service) and why?
9. Would you like to make any additional comments?

Thank you for participating in this interview. I will forward you a copy of the interview transcript in the near future. Could you please review the transcript and make any amendments that are required. Please also contact me, if following this interview you would like to make any further comments.



	<p align="center"><b>Invitation to participate in research study- Managers</b>  The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</p>	
<p><b>What is the research about?</b></p> <p>The research involves contemporary workforce development and management which is currently facing a number of challenges in achieving an effective and efficient workplace considering ageing workforces, a reduction in the number of young people entering the labour market and the increasing need for employees to balance their work and life issues. These challenges impact across the sector of human resource development and management activities including recruitment, selection, retention, workforce profiling and prediction models, skills identification and training and development requirements and frameworks, performance management frameworks and employment conditions. The research also aims to identify if there are intergenerational issues in the workplace and how agencies can best met work/life balance issues and expectations of its employees.</p> <p>You are invited to contribute to this research by participating in an interview.</p> <p><b>Why is this interview being conducted?</b></p> <p>The chief investigators and supervisors of the research project are Dr Martin Grimmer and Dr Angela Martin from the University of Tasmania. The interview is being conducted as part of a research project being undertaken by Katrina Gonda to fulfil the requirements for a PhD in the School of Management at the University of Tasmania. The research is supported by the Public Sector Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet.</p> <p><b>What is the purpose of this interview?</b></p> <p>The purpose of the survey is to gain an understanding of employee's views, perceptions and expectations surrounding their employment. The research concerns the context of how work is arranged, the value of work and related areas including work/life balance, flexible employment and age related issues.</p> <p>Further to this, the research also aims to find out what managers believe in regards to these issues and how they and their agencies currently meet these needs and what challenges they will face in the future.</p> <p><b>How long will the interview take?</b></p> <p>The interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. The interviews will be held at the Public Sector Management Office, 144 Macquarie Street, Hobart.</p> <p><b>What type of interview is it?</b></p> <p>The interviewer will ask you only a few questions, followed by discussions of the participant's experience, perceptions and views regarding their employment.</p> <p><b>How will my answers be used?</b></p> <p>The interview will be audio taped for transcription and will be returned to the participant for correction and amendment. The transcript will then be coded. Your responses will be treated in <b>confidence</b>; no personally identifiable information will be released. Brief notes may also be taken during the interview for the purposes of noting question progress or for the purpose of recall during the interview.</p> <p>Some of the information on the participant information sheet will be used for demographic analysis and hence in age categories, but small demographic groups will not be reported in a format that could be considered to have any identifiable elements. It is a university requirement that responses are securely stored.</p> <p><b>Do I have to participate?</b></p> <p>Participation is <b>voluntary</b> and participants may discontinue their participation at any time.</p>		

**Who do I contact if I have any queries?**

You can contact the researcher Katrina Gonda by telephone on 62 32 7036 or by emailing [katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au). You may also contact the chief investigators, Dr Martin Grimmer, Head of School or Dr Angela Martin, Deputy Head of School, School of Management, Faculty of Business and Commerce, University of Tasmania by emailing [martin.grimmer@utas.edu.au](mailto:martin.grimmer@utas.edu.au) or [angela.martin@utas.edu.au](mailto:angela.martin@utas.edu.au).

This research has ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study you should contact the Executive Officer (phone 03 6226 7479 or email – [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au)). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote *HREC project number H10356*.

**What do I do to express my interest in participating?**

Please complete the attached details sheet within 10 days of receiving this email and return the form in hard copy or by email to Katrina Gonda (email: [Katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:Katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au) or by mail to Katrina Gonda, Public Sector Management Office, 144 Macquarie Street, Hobart and mark the envelope "confidential and private". You will receive an email acknowledgement upon receipt of your form.

**On what basis will I be selected or not for an interview?**

The only criteria for selection or non-selection will be on the basis of the number of expressions of interest received. There are a limited number of interview places available.



**Dr Martin Grimmer**  
Investigators



**Dr Angela Martin**



**Katrina Gonda**

## Details Sheet-manager

The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management

### SECTION 1: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Code:

Department

Section

Position Title

Length of time in this position

Please list formal qualifications (if applicable)

Number of employees in your section\*

Please provide an estimate of their ages:\*

Please indicate the number of employees in each age group in the boxes below

under 25 ☐ 25-34yrs ☐ 35-44yrs ☐ 45-54yrs ☐ +55yrs ☐

Please indicate the number of full time and part time employees\*

Full time  
☐

Part time  
☐

Have you participated in selection panels for your work area?

Yes  
☐

No ☐

The \* marked fields are required in order to determine supervisory/managerial responsibilities and structure. Your name will not be disclosed.

### SECTION 1: DETAILS

1.1 Age years

1.2 Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ e.g. Hobart, Sydney, London

1.3 Gender Male ☐ Female ☐

1.4 How many years have you lived in Tasmania? \_\_\_\_\_ (years)

1.5 Date joined the Tasmanian State Service \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ dd,mm,yyyy. If unsure of exact date indicate year or month and year.

1.6 Are you currently in a full time ☐ or part time ☐ position?

1.7 Are you a permanent or fixed term employee? Permanent ☐ Fixed term ☐

1.8 Have you had periods of extended leave (long service, maternity/paternity/other)?  
Yes ☐ No ☐

1.9 What is your position title? \_\_\_\_\_  
e.g. Administrative Assistant, Team Leader, Manager, Plant Operator

1.10 What is your classification level? \_\_\_\_\_ e.g. Administration and Clerical Level 4

1.11 How long have you been in your current position? \_\_\_\_\_ months/years

1.12	Which Department do you currently work in? _____
1.13	Is this the first position that you have held in the Tasmanian State Service? _____
1.14	How long do anticipate continuing your employment in the Tasmania State Service? _____ (years)
<b>SECTION 2: EDUCATION</b>	
2.1	<p>What is your highest level of primary or secondary schooling that you have successfully completed? (select the highest level only)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Did not go to school</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Year 7 or below</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Year 8 or below</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Year 9</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Year 10</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Year 11</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Year 12</p>
2.2	<p>Have you completed any trade qualifications? If yes, please provide title of course and institution.</p> <p>_____</p>
2.3	<p>What is the highest level of education you have achieved? Please indicate discipline area and institution e.g. Bachelor of Business UTAS. This includes undergraduate degrees, Associate Diplomas, Certificate of Technology, Technician Certificate, vocational qualifications, Undergraduate degrees, post-graduate degrees, Masters or PhD. Include title, field of study and institution.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>If this question does not apply, please write N/A.</p>
<b>3. DEPENDENTS</b>	
<p>Could you please indicate if you currently have dependent care responsibilities (this includes children, parents or other elderly family members)      Yes   <input type="checkbox"/>      No   <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, could you please indicate number/ages and gender</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>If yes, please indicate the number of hours per week during normal working hours that you have to make alternative arrangements for in order to meet your work commitments</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Do you believe that you will have caring responsibilities for either children or elderly family members in the future?      Yes   <input type="checkbox"/>      No   <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Do you regularly participate in sporting or community events?   Yes   <input type="checkbox"/>      No   <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Are you currently undertaking a course of study?   Yes   <input type="checkbox"/>      No   <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Consent Form-Managers</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</p>
<b>Research Project Title:</b>	<b>The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</b>
<b>Researcher's Name:</b>	<b>Katrina Gonda</b>
<p>I have been advised of the nature and purpose of the research. I understand and agree to participate in the interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.</li> <li>• I understand that the interview will be approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in duration.</li> <li>• I understand that this involves an interview and that the interview will be audio taped.</li> <li>• I understand that the audio tape will only be used as a basis of writing up the interview into hard copy text format.</li> <li>• I understand that I will receive a transcript of the interview and will return it to the researcher with any amendments. Following the return of the transcript, I understand that the tape will be erased.</li> <li>• I understand that the contents of the tape and the transcript will be kept in confidence by the researcher and only included in any wider reporting in ways that will not identify me as the interviewee. I understand that all the research data will be securely (locked) stored in the Commerce Building, on the University of Tasmania (Hobart campus) premises for a period of five years, after which time it will be destroyed. I understand that any electronic record will be deleted and that hard copies will be shredded after a period of five years following publication of the data.</li> <li>• I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time during the research and can at that time choose to withdraw any data I have provided. I further understand that I can, if I wish, withdraw any data I have provided up until analysis of the data commences.</li> <li>• I understand that I will not receive any payment for my participation in the interview by either the University or the researcher.</li> </ul>	
<b>Name of interviewee:</b> .....	
<b>Signed:</b> .....	
<b>Dated:</b> .....	
<p>I have explained the research to the participant and I believe that the consent is informed that the person understands the implications of participation.</p>	
<b>Researcher's signature and date</b> .....	

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interview Guide – Managers</b></p> <p><b>DISCUSSION POINTS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management</p>	
<p><b>ATTRACTORS FOR APPLYING FOR A STATE SERVICE POSITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work was related to my qualifications or experience</li> <li>• The position involved interesting work</li> <li>• Location of the position</li> <li>• The reputation of the Agency/Department</li> <li>• Just wanted a job</li> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Was told by someone that it was a good place to work:</li> <li>• Believed the position would allow for job security:</li> <li>• Ability to transfer to other areas/departments later:</li> <li>• A good salary and ability to progress in salary range:</li> <li>• The training/development offered</li> </ul>	
<p><b>CURRENT JOB SATISFACTION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duties/expectations made clear</li> <li>• Recognition for effort</li> <li>• Regular feedback provided</li> <li>• Good managers/supervisors</li> <li>• Ability to be creative/innovative</li> <li>• Good leadership</li> <li>• Interesting work</li> <li>• Sound people management practices</li> <li>• Good working relationships</li> <li>• Training provided</li> <li>• Career pathways</li> <li>• Salary</li> <li>• Leave entitlements</li> <li>• Flexible working arrangements</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> <p><b>REMAINING WITH THE TSS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoying current position</li> <li>• Encouraged and included in team activities</li> <li>• Feel valued and acknowledged for my work</li> <li>• Provided with the opportunity to contribute and consulted on work matters</li> <li>• The work is interesting</li> <li>• Good salary</li> <li>• Job location</li> </ul>	

- Workload levels
- Ability to manage work/life balance
- Flexible employment
- Training/development opportunities
- Ability to move to other areas/agencies
- Relative job security

## **WORK/LIFE BALANCE**

**What is it? Is it more than just different patterns of work?**

**How do you define a balance between work and your outside life? Are there conflicts or benefits between the two?**

- Flexitime
- LWOP
- Changed patterns of work arrangement: start and finishing times, working outside normal hours and days
- Self-rosters
- Career breaks
- Job Sharing
- Work from home
- Better training and development opportunities
- Access to retirement/health information
- Health and wellbeing provisions/programs
- More flexible leave arrangements: e.g. half pay
- More flexible employment options (beyond part time arrangements. e.g. 3 months work followed by 3 months leave but salary paid at .5 over the 6 months)
- Job rotation/interagency rotation
- Payment for work not hours
- Process to allow a transition in occupations where age factors may impact on work capability
- On call or stand in allowances for people who have retired or semi-retired but are available to work at short notice

## **RETIREMENT/WORK INTENTIONS**

When do you intend to retire/leave your employment with the Tasmanian State Service?

What are some of the possible reasons for not continuing:

- Not enjoying current position
- Feel not encouraged or included in team
- Not valued, acknowledged
- Not provided with the opportunity to contribute or to be consulted on work matters
- Offer or opportunity of other more interesting work
- Offer or opportunity for better salary
- Excessive or increasing workload
- Need to care for family or to obtain a better work/life balance
- Access to and ability to accrue additional leave hours than currently provided for (Leave bank)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More flexible phased-in-retirement arrangements and return to work options post-retirement</li> </ul>
What do you believe are the reasons, expectations of the above for the people under your management/supervision
Workforce issues/identification of manager training and development?
Recruitment and retention
Retirement & superannuation
Capacity of older workers
Workforce planning
Remuneration
Performance Management
Training and retraining
Career planning and development
Occupational health and safety
Knowledge management
Work/life balance & flexible work practices
Others? Please specify. Are there any other comments that you would like to make?



## **Interview format-Managers**

The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management

### **Introduction**

The research I am doing is exploring the changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce. In this the most critical factors for public sector organisations at present for maintaining workforce capability appears to be related to:

1. Ageing populations. This has a twofold effect on the Tasmanian public sector; firstly there is the issue of continuing to provide services to the Tasmanian public. There will be a continuing demand for public services, especially in the area of health, along with changes to service delivery mechanisms.
2. An ageing workforce. The Tasmanian State Workforce is ageing and there is a general trend to older employees across all of the agencies and the age increase of employees is also noted in a number of occupational areas. Retaining employees will be a key imperative for the Tasmanian State Workforce levels.
3. Age differences. Recent literature has shown that there is a considerable level of comment and interest in generational differences and how they play out in the workplace. This is evidenced in the literature covering attraction, engagement and retention policies and practices. This also encompasses the conditions of employment, and management policies and practices.
4. Work/life balance. There has been considerable attention and activity related to work/life balance for individuals and how this has been addressed within organisations. This too impacts on workforce management policies, practices and outcomes. There appears to be a number of different meanings for what work/life balance is and how this understood by individuals and organisation and how it should be addressed in the workplace.

I would like to gain a better understanding of how employees view their employment and issues relating to what attracted you to join the state service, what are the key benefits of being a state service employee and what you perceive will be instrumental in you continuing your employment.

[Demographic material (age, gender, position, length in position, qualifications (information sheet given to interviewees at the commencement of the interview))].

Do you require any further explanation or information at this time? Are you comfortable to continue the interview and to now ask you a series of questions? These questions may require you to take a few moments to consider before answering and that is fine.

**Question format:**

1. Can you explain why you applied for a position in the Tasmanian State Service (Workforce)?
2. Were or have these reasons been met?
3. What do you like about your job? What could be better?
4. What things do you believe will contribute to you continuing in your role?
5. What do you believe work/life balance is or means?
6. What work/life balance aspects do you think are attractive to you?
7. What flexible work options do you think you may need in the future and why?
8. How long do you think you will remain in this position (and in the state service) and why?
9. Would you like to make any additional comments?

Can you now answer these questions again but in view of your understanding, perceptions and expectations as a manager and supervisor of state service employees?

10. Can you explain why you believe people apply for a position in the Tasmanian State Service (Workforce)?
11. Do you these reasons been met?
12. What do you think they like about their job?
13. What things do you believe will contribute to them continuing in your role?
14. What do you believe work/life balance is or means to the employees your section?
15. What work/life balance aspects do you think are attractive to the employees your section?
16. What flexible work options do you think you, as a manager, may need in the future and why?
17. How long do you think your employees will remain in this position (and in the state service) and why?
18. Would you like to make any additional comments?

Thank you for participating in this interview. I will forward you a copy of the interview transcript in the near future. Could you please review the transcript and make any amendments that are required. Please also contact me, if following this interview you would like to make any further comments.

### Agency Letter and Survey

Head of Agency

Secretary  
Department

Dear

Late last year I extended an invitation to your agency to participate in research being sponsored by the Public Sector Management Office.

The chief investigators and supervisors of the research project are Dr Martin Grimmer and Dr Angela Martin from the University of Tasmania. The interview is being conducted as part of a research project being undertaken by Katrina Gonda to fulfil the requirements for a PhD in the School of Management at the University of Tasmania. The research is supported by the Public Sector Management Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The research title is "The changing profile of the Tasmanian State workforce: key factors for sustainable workforce management".

The research covers issues pertaining to contemporary workforce development and management including, ageing workforces, work-life balance, flexible employment options and workforce planning. Organisations are currently facing a number of challenges in achieving an effective and efficient workplace. These challenges impact across the sector of human resource and workforce planning, development and management policies and practices. At present, Katrina Gonda is undertaking a number of interviews with employees and managers across most agencies.

This stage of the research involves a questionnaire for agencies to complete. The questionnaire concerns issues relating to ageing, workforce planning, work conditions and leave arrangements that are currently in place and being planned for the future. (An electronic copy of the questionnaire will be forwarded to HR Managers).

#### **How will the answers be used?**

The questionnaire responses will be coded. Your responses will be treated in confidence; no personally or agency identifiable information will be released.

All the research data will be securely (locked) stored in the Commerce Building, on the University of Tasmania (Hobart campus) premises for a period of five years, after which time it will be destroyed. Any electronic record will be deleted and that hard copies will be shredded after a period of five years following publication of the data. Participation at any time during the research can be withdrawn at any time and you may choose to withdraw any data provided. You may, also, withdraw any data provided up until analysis of the data commences.

No payment for participation in the questionnaire will be made by either the University or the researchers.

**Who do I contact if I have any queries?**

You can contact the researcher Katrina Gonda by telephone on 62 32 7036 or by emailing [katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au). You may also contact the chief investigators, Dr Martin Grimmer, Head of School or Dr Angela Martin, Deputy Head of School, School of Management, Faculty of Business and Commerce, University of Tasmania by emailing [martin.grimmer@utas.edu.au](mailto:martin.grimmer@utas.edu.au) or [angela.martin@utas.edu.au](mailto:angela.martin@utas.edu.au).

This research has ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study you should contact the Executive Officer (phone 03 6226 7479 or email – [human.ethics@utas.edu.au](mailto:human.ethics@utas.edu.au)). The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote *HREC project number H10356*.

The attached questionnaire can be completed either in hard copy or electronic format and it is requested that the questionnaire be returned to Katrina Gonda by 20 August 2009.

Further information about the research can be obtained by contacting Katrina Gonda directly by email [katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:katrina.gonda@dpac.tas.gov.au) or by telephone on 03 6232 7036.

Yours sincerely

Frank Ogle  
DIRECTOR

July 2009



# Agency Questionnaire

The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management

**Research Project Title:**

**The changing profile of the Tasmanian State Workforce: factors for sustainable workforce management**

**Researcher's Name:**

**Katrina Gonda**

**Name and position of person completing the questionnaire:**

**Name:** .....

**Position:** .....

**Agency:** .....

I have been advised of the nature and purpose of the research.

- I understand that the completed questionnaire will be kept in confidence by the researcher and only included in any wider reporting in ways that will not identify me as the interviewee. I understand that all the research data will be securely (locked) stored in the Commerce Building, on the University of Tasmania (Hobart campus) premises for a period of five years, after which time it will be destroyed. I understand that any electronic record will be deleted and that hard copies will be shredded after a period of five years following publication of the data.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation at any time during the research and can at that time choose to withdraw any data I have provided. I further understand that I can, if I wish, withdraw any data I have provided up until analysis of the data commences.
- I understand that I will not receive any payment for my participation in the interview by either the University or the researcher.

**Signed:**

**Dated:**

1	Our agency provides new employees with information relating to their terms and conditions of employment. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
2	If yes to question 1, how is the provision of information undertaken? Electronically <input type="checkbox"/> Orientation session <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> please specify.....
3	Does your agency use the intranet to inform employees of their terms and conditions of employment? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Does your agency have a workplace diversity policy in place? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

5	If yes, how is this policy measured?				
6	Does your agency have flexible start and finish times for your employees? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
7	Which of the following does your agency use to meet work/life balance issues?				
Flexitime <input type="checkbox"/>		Self-rostering <input type="checkbox"/>		SSALS <input type="checkbox"/>	Jobshare <input type="checkbox"/>
LWOP <input type="checkbox"/>		Graduated return to work following parental, maternity, paternity leave <input type="checkbox"/>		Phased in retirement <input type="checkbox"/>	Leave Bank <input type="checkbox"/>
Graduated return to work after LWOP <input type="checkbox"/>		Graduated return after extended sick leave <input type="checkbox"/>		Graduated return to work following long term workcover leave <input type="checkbox"/>	Career/work break leave/sabbatical <input type="checkbox"/>
Altered work arrangements such as compressed working weeks <input type="checkbox"/>		Altered working arrangements such as 3 months work followed by 3 months unpaid leave <input type="checkbox"/>		Altered working arrangements such as fixed months of work e.g. to cover high absence periods (December, April) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Please provide details if you answered yes to any of these. (in regards to the number of employees accessing such arrangements, procedures for applying, delegation for approving/training or assistance provided to the person approving/declining applications)					
8	Which leave provisions in question 7 have formal policies?				
9	What informal arrangements are you aware of that are used in your agency to assist individuals in meeting work/life issues?				
10	What wellbeing programs or activities does your agency provide for employees?				

	If yes to question 10, are these activities restricted to particular age groups? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
11	Does your agency have an Employee Assistance Program? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
12	Does your agency provide directly or refer employees to information regarding retirement? This may extend into retirement issues, superannuation issues or taxation issues. Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
13	Does your agency undertake climate surveys? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
	If yes, how often are they held?		
	Do you benchmark these? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Are the survey results available to all employees? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
14	Does your agency conduct separation/exit interviews and questionnaires? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
	If yes, how are these undertaken? (by the section Manager, online)		
	Are the findings of the interviews or questionnaires reported collectively? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
15	Does your agency have any retention strategies in place to avoid an employee leaving the organisation? If so, please explain what strategies are used?		
16	Does your agency provide career counselling? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, is this provided internally <input type="checkbox"/> or externally <input type="checkbox"/>		
17	Does your agency have any age management policy in place? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, what are the objectives of this policy?		
18	Does your agency require supervisors and managers to undertake training relating to diversity management? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
19	Is your agency currently undertaking any specific recruitment? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> This may be regarding age recruitment or occupation targets.		
20	What do you believe are the most important issues in meeting workforce capability needs for your organisation in the future? (please indicate all of those that apply)		
	Recruitment (in general) <input type="checkbox"/>	Recruiting suitably experienced/ skilled people <input type="checkbox"/>	Recruiting professionals <input type="checkbox"/>



	Retention of employees (all ages) <input type="checkbox"/>	Retention of older employees (those over 45 years of age) <input type="checkbox"/>	Retention of younger employees (those under 30 years of age) <input type="checkbox"/>
	Retention of employees aged between 30 and 45 years of age <input type="checkbox"/>	Meeting the flexible work requirements of employees whilst meeting operational requirements <input type="checkbox"/>	Having a range of training and development opportunities for employees, regardless of age <input type="checkbox"/>
	Training for managers in addressing the range of work/life balance issues and management of the related policies and programs <input type="checkbox"/>	Succession Planning skills and policies <input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate return to work provisions following leave <input type="checkbox"/>
	Additional leave policies and practices <input type="checkbox"/>	Changing arrangements to work allocation and to how, when and where work is undertaken <input type="checkbox"/>	Managing intergenerational workforces <input type="checkbox"/>
	Any other activities relating to workforce capability and management that are currently in place or being developed at this time:		

Please make any further comments relating to the following issues:

- work/life balance
- intergenerational workforces
- recruitment, retention and engagement
- development and training
- work or leave provisions or arrangements
- management skills and knowledge
- workforce planning activities
- workforce development activities

## Participant Demographics

	Emp. Category	Employment category	First position held in the TSS	age	Gender	Years in Tasmania	Years of employment in the State Service	Classification	Length in current position
1	Manager	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Male	over 30 years	5 to 10 years	SES	4-5 years
2	Employee	Full time permanent	Yes	20-29	Male	15 to 20 years	1 to 3 years	A&C 4-5	1-2 years
3	Employee	Full time fixed term	Yes	-20	Male	15 to 20 years	1 to 3 years	Trainee - Cadet- Graduate	1-2 years
4	Employee	Full time fixed term	Yes	20-29	Female	1-5 years	less than 1 year	Trainee - Cadet- Graduate	Less than 1 year
5	Manager	Full time permanent	No	30-44	Male	over 30 years	10 to 15 years	Professional	3-4 years
6	Employee	Full time permanent	Yes	20-29	Female	5-10 years	1 to 3 years	A&C 2-3	1-2 years
7	Manager	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Female	over 30 years	15 to 20 years	A&C 10-12	3-4 years
8	Manager	Full time permanent	No	55-64	Female	over 30 years	10 to 15 years	A&C 8-9	6-8 years
9	Manager	Full time permanent	Yes	55-64	Female	over 30 years	1 to 3 years	A&C 10-12	1-2 years
10	Manager	Full time permanent	No	55-64	Male	over 30 years	15 to 20 years	SES	3-4 years
11	Employee	Full time permanent	Yes	30-44	Female	over 30 years	5 to 10 years	A&C 4-5	Less than 1 year
12	Employee	Full time fixed term	No	20-29	Female	over 30 years	3 to 5 years	A&C 4-5	1-2 years
13	Employee	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Male	over 30 years	10 to 15 years	A&C 10-12	Less than 1 year
14	Employee	Full time permanent	No	30-44	Male	over 30 years	10 to 15 years	A&C 6-7	3-4 years
15	Employee	Full time permanent	No	65	Male	over 30 years	over 20 years	Professional	4-5 years
16	Employee	Full time permanent	No	20-29	Female	over 20 years	3 to 5 years	A&C 10-12	Less than 1 year
17	Employee	Full time permanent	Yes	30-44	Female	1-5 years	1 to 3 years	A&C 4-5	1-2 years
18	Employee	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Female	over 30 years	15 to 20 years	A&C 10-12	1-2 years
19	Manager	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Female	over 30 years	10 to 15 years	A&C 10-12	3-4 years
20	Employee	Full time fixed term	Yes	-20	Female	15 to 20 years	1 to 3 years	Trainee - Cadet- Graduate	1-2 years
21	Employee	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Male	over 30 years	15 to 20 years	A&C 8-9	4-5 years
22	Employee	Full time permanent	Yes	30-44	Male	over 30 years	1 to 3 years	A&C 6-7	1-2 years
23	Manager	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Male	over 30 years	15 to 20 years	SES	9-10 years
24	Employee	Full time permanent	No	65	Female	over 30 years	5 to 10 years	A&C 4-5	3-4 years
25	Employee	Full time permanent	No	45-54	Male	over 30 years	10 to 15 years	Construction	Less than 1 year
26	Manager	Full time permanent	Yes	55-64	Female	over 20 years	less than 1 year	Professional	Less than 1 year
27	Employee	Part time permanent	No	20-29	Female	over 20 years	1 to 3 years	Professional	Less than 1 year
28	Employee	Full time permanent	Yes	45-54	Male	over 30 years	15 to 20 years	Hospitality/Tourism	4-5 years
29	Employee	Part time permanent	Yes	30-44	Female	over 30 years	1 to 3 years	Hospitality/Tourism	1-2 years
30	Employee	Part time permanent	No	30-44	Female	over 30 years	over 20 years	A&C 6-7	Less than 1 year

<b>EMPLOYEES-NVivo Coding</b>	
<b>REASONS FOR APPLYING - CURRENT POSITION</b>	
Tree Node	The work was related to my qualifications or experience
Tree Node	The position involved interesting work
Tree Node	Location of the position
Tree Node	The reputation of the Agency Department
Tree Node	Just wanted a job
Tree Node	Career development
Tree Node	Was told by someone that it was a good place to work
Tree Node	Believed the position would allow for job security
Tree Node	Ability to transfer to other areas-departments later
Tree Node	A good salary and ability to progress in salary range
Tree Node	The training-development offered
Tree Node	Other
<b>REASONS FOR APPLYING - FIRST JOB</b>	
Tree Node	The position involved interesting work
Tree Node	The work was related to my qualifications or experience
Tree Node	Location of the position
Tree Node	Career development
Tree Node	The reputation of the Agency Department
Tree Node	Just wanted a job
Tree Node	Was told by someone that it was a good place to work
Tree Node	Ability to transfer to other areas-departments later
Tree Node	A good salary and ability to progress in salary range
Tree Node	Believed the position would allow for job security
Tree Node	The training-development offered
Tree Node	Other
<b>CURRENT JOB SATISFACTION - what do you like about your job</b>	
Tree Node	Duties-expectations made clear
Tree Node	Recognition for effort
Tree Node	Regular feedback provided
Tree Node	Good managers & supervisors
Tree Node	Ability to be creative and or innovative
Tree Node	Good leadership
Tree Node	Interesting work
Tree Node	Sound people management practices
Tree Node	Good working relationships
Tree Node	Training provided
Tree Node	Career pathways
Tree Node	Salary
Tree Node	Leave entitlements
Tree Node	Flexible working arrangements
Tree Node	Other
<b>REMAINING WITH THE TSS</b>	
Tree Node	Enjoying current position
Tree Node	Encouraged and included in team activities

Tree Node	Feel valued and acknowledged for my work
Tree Node	Provided with the opportunity to contribute and consulted on work matters
Tree Node	The work is interesting
Tree Node	Good salary
Tree Node	Job location
Tree Node	Workload levels
Tree Node	Ability to manage work-life balance
Tree Node	Flexible employment
Tree Node	Training & development opportunities
Tree Node	Ability to move to other areas & or agencies
Tree Node	Relative job security
<b>WORK-LIFE BALANCE FACTORS Definition - meaning</b>	
Tree Node	definition
Tree Node	conflict or spillover
Tree Node	positives
<b>WORK-LIFE BALANCE FACTORS</b>	
Tree Node	Flexitime
Tree Node	LWOP
Tree Node	Changed patterns of work arrangement e.g. start and finishing times, working outside normal hours and days
Tree Node	Self-rostering (team)
Tree Node	Career breaks
Tree Node	Job Sharing
Tree Node	Work from home
Tree Node	Better training and development opportunities
Tree Node	Access to retirement & or health information
Tree Node	Health and wellbeing provisions or programs
Tree Node	More flexible leave arrangements- e.g. half pay
Tree Node	More flexible employment options (beyond part time arrangements. e.g. 3 months work followed by 3 months leave but salary paid at .5 over the 6 months
Tree Node	Job rotation and or interagency rotation
Tree Node	Payment for work not hours
Tree Node	Process to allow a transition in occupations where age factors may impact on work capability
Tree Node	On call or stand in allowances for people who have retired or semi-retired but are available to work at short notice
Tree Node	Other
<b>RETIREMENT AND CONTINUING WORK INTENTIONS</b>	
Tree Node	Retirement plans
Tree Node	Continuing employment
<b>REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUING</b>	
Tree Node	Not enjoying current position
Tree Node	Feel not encouraged or included in team

Managers' Coding – NVivo codes	
<b>Managers As Employees</b>	
Tree Node	Work life balance spillover positives and negatives
Tree Node	Work life balance current attractors
Tree Node	Work at home
Tree Node	What work life balance means to me
Tree Node	Staying in the role
Tree Node	Return to work post retirement
Tree Node	Retirement intentions
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing not consulted or not included
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing not interesting work
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing better salary elsewhere
Tree Node	Reasons for applying
Tree Node	Job satisfaction training and development
Tree Node	Job satisfaction sound people management practices
Tree Node	Job satisfaction recognition
Tree Node	Job satisfaction org expectations and support
Tree Node	Job satisfaction leave arrangements
Tree Node	Job satisfaction interesting work
Tree Node	Job satisfaction good working relationships
Tree Node	Job satisfaction good managers
Tree Node	Job satisfaction flexible work arrangements
Tree Node	Job satisfaction feedback
Tree Node	Job satisfaction creativity and innovation
Tree Node	Job satisfaction career pathway
Tree Node	Future work-life balance phased in retirement
Tree Node	Future work-life balance – on-call relieving job sharing
Tree Node	Expectations met
Tree Node	Current job satisfaction
Tree Node	Continue post retirement in the TSS
<b>As Managers</b>	
Tree Node	Work life balance issues in the workplace
Tree Node	What work life balance means to employees
Tree Node	What people like about their job
Tree Node	State service specific
Tree Node	Future workplace work arrangements and flexible work
Tree Node	Future workplace health and safety, performance mgt
Tree Node	Future workplace and culture
Tree Node	Future workforce retirement and superannuation
Tree Node	Future workforce recruitment and retention
Tree Node	Future workforce planning and work arrangements
Tree Node	Future attention and investment in the workplace
Tree Node	Challenges in meeting work life balance organisation

Tree Node	Availability or attraction training and development career advancement
Tree Node	Ageing issues
Tree Node	Why people apply to join the TSS
<b>Managers as employees</b>	
Tree Node	Work life balance what does it mean to you
Tree Node	Work life balance spillover
Tree Node	Work life balance managing life and work
Tree Node	Staying in the role
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS job security
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS workload levels
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS more training and development
Tree Node	staying in the TSS management
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS flexibility regarding leave
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS flexibility and work arrangement
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS contribute and be consulted
Tree Node	staying in the TSS career advancement
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS organisation support
Tree Node	Staying in the TSS job rotation or mobility
Tree Node	Retirement intentions
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing work related
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing-not being able to contribute or to be consulted
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing offer or opportunity for better salary
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing not interesting work
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing not encouraged or feel a member of a team
Tree Node	Reasons for not continuing excessive or increasing workload
Tree Node	Reasons for applying
Tree Node	Family expectation
Tree Node	Career advancement
Tree Node	Future work life self-rostering
Tree Node	Future work life balance working from home
Tree Node	Future work life balance occupation changes
Tree Node	Future work life balance job sharing
Tree Node	Future work life balance interagency or job rotation opportunities
Tree Node	Future work life balance health and wellbeing
Tree Node	Future work life balance flexible work arrangements
Tree Node	Future work life balance enhanced leave arrangements
Tree Node	Future work life balance different payment for job done not hours
Tree Node	Future work life balance child or elder care leave provisions
Tree Node	Future work life balance career break
Tree Node	Future work life balance availability for on call work
Tree Node	Future work life balance availability of information
Tree Node	Future work life balance lwop
Tree Node	Expectations
Tree Node	Current job satisfaction
Tree Node	Job satisfaction support
Tree Node	Job satisfaction salary
Tree Node	Job satisfaction leave
Tree Node	Job satisfaction interesting work
Tree Node	Job satisfaction flexibility

<b>Tree Node</b>	Job satisfaction creativity and innovation
<b>Tree Node</b>	Job satisfaction clear duties
<b>Tree Node</b>	Job satisfaction career pathways
<b>Tree Node</b>	Job satisfaction adequate training
<b>Tree Node</b>	Job satisfaction recognition for effort
<b>MANAGERS-(Managing workforces) NVivo Coding</b>	
<b>Tree Node</b>	Why people apply to join the TSS
<b>Tree Node</b>	What people like about their job
<b>Tree Node</b>	Challenges in meeting work life balance organisation
<b>Tree Node</b>	Availability or attraction training and development career advancement
<b>Tree Node</b>	Ageing issues-current and future issues/impact
<b>Tree Node</b>	Work life balance issues in the workplace
<b>Tree Node</b>	What work-life balance means to employees
<b>Tree Node</b>	State service specific-entitlements
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future workplace work arrangements and flexible work
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future workplace health and safety, performance management
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future workplace and culture
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future workforce retirement and superannuation
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future workforce recruitment and retention
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future workforce planning and work arrangements
<b>Tree Node</b>	Future attention and investment in the workplace